

How I make a picture

by

Austin Briggs

MEMBER OF THE FACULTY OF

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.

Westport, Connecticut



Meet Austin Briggs

by Henry C. Pitz

Austin Briggs is up in the first ranks of the illustration army. He didn't arrive with any dazzling rain of fireworks; his technique is not spectacular; he has no particular tricks of display, but his fellow illustrators look at his pictures with great respect and predict a steady expansion of his abilities. And the reading public has a solid regard for his work, a regard that is not an overnight enthusiasm but one that has grown slowly but with certainty over a span of years.

Behind the Briggs pictures are more than two decades of hard work and constant striving for improvement. They are the result of much patient building and some rebuilding. They sum up a long accumulation of experience, a gradual sharpening of technique and a dogged pursuit of self. Briggs spent a good many years looking for himself and, once that search was rewarded, he became the illustrator we know today.

He was in the big magazines as far back as 1927. But he was not certain of his own viewpoint. He thought too little of his own personal approach and too much of other personalities in the field. The discovery of self took time, as it often does, but the story of it carries a message to those who are embarked on the same search.

Austin Briggs was born in Humboldt, Minnesota, but he has no nostalgic feelings about the place. He has no memory of it, for he was born in a railway car on a siding, while his father was installing telegraphic instruments in the local station. After the death of his father he lived with his grandparents, first in Marion, Michigan, and then Detroit. He began to draw at an early age and in high school his work attracted so much attention that he was awarded a scholarship to the Wicker Art School. He attended afternoon and evening classes but his interest flagged and he gave it up. He had concluded that Wicker didn't know anything; later, when he was older and wiser, he realized that he had missed some excellent instruction.

Briggs spent one semester at the City College of Detroit after his graduation from high school, but he was still looking for an opportunity to use his drawing ability. His chance came when an illustrator who specialized in automobile pictures took him on as an assistant. Briggs was only sixteen then, but his ability to draw the human figure was considerable, and it became his task to paint in the pretty girls and prosperous men, in a slightly reduced scale, so as to enhance the proportions of the sleek, shiny cars. It was good training and thirty-five dollars a week was an excellent salary for a youngster, but he became rebellious when he learned that his employer was receiving a thousand dollars a drawing. He threw up his job, became a free lance and did very well.

But he was dissatisfied with advertising routine and anxious to do story illustration. His first opportunity came in 1927 when he began working for the *Dearborn Independent*. Later in the year he sent some photostats of his *Dearborn Independent* drawings to *Collier's*. He received an encouraging note from the art editor, so he packed up and moved to New York. He first enrolled in classes of the Art Students League and then called upon *Collier's*. The editor who had encouraged him was leaving, but his successor gave Briggs his first big magazine assignment.

For about three years Briggs worked busily. He was attending classes at the Art Students League and studying under that fine draftsman George Bridgman and with Walter Jack Duncan. He also became acquainted with Wallace Morgan. And meanwhile he was drawing illustrations for *Collier's*, *McClure's*, *Pictorial Review* and newspaper advertisements for *Cosmopolitan*. All these illustrations were in pen and ink, for at this time, Briggs had done little painting in color. He was beginning to be regarded as an important young illustrator when the depression came and Briggs' work disappeared from the magazines.

There followed some years of varied work doing anything that

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came to hand, including book illustration and movie posters for Fox films. It was a period of discouragement, for Briggs considered himself a failure after a brilliant beginning. But it was also a period of self-appraisal and criticism; an eventually healthy interlude that led to better things.

He was merciless in his scrutiny of himself. "I realized that I just wasn't doing acceptable work, because if it had been good, they would have wanted to buy it. With that new attitude I set about learning to draw, which I never could do before, in spite of the fact that some of my illustrations had been more or less acceptable. I really didn't know the craft of my profession. I think I had imagination then, but really didn't know how to use it. The intervening years when I did movie posters and a few book illustrations were spent in trying to find myself. I used to think that when some other artist did an illustration in a particular way, that proved it was the way to do it. It was only when I began to look at the idea from my own point of view that I started to get any place. It was better if I didn't try to figure out what Parker or Von Schmidt would do and realized that it was my problem, and that from my point of view my experience was just as good as theirs.

"I really don't know myself what makes my own point of view. I do know that it is what people want to buy, whereas they didn't want to buy my idea of how somebody else would do it. One can't achieve any sort of success as an illustrator until one concentrates on and expresses one's own point of view."

A great many young illustrators have stood at the same crossroads that Briggs faced. Most of them have refused or been unable to take the right turn, because they have lacked, first, the downright fortitude that is required for a merciless self-examination and, second, the stamina to slowly and painfully work out their early mistakes.

Briggs, after his cleansing soul-searching, began working toward a personal expression when he became one of the regular illustrator contributors to *Blue Book* magazine. He has a warm spot in his heart for Don Kennicott, the editor. Kennicott was sympathetic and understanding. A great many good illustrators have developed from the *Blue Book* school, a tribute to an editor who allowed his artists the maximum of freedom. Briggs introduced one innovation during this period; he began making drawings for line reproduction on white window-shade cloth. The pleasantly irregular texture gives pencil or crayon a much more characterful line or tone than the customary Rossboard patterns. It was during this period that he began using models to give added authenticity to his pictures.

But work and experimentation are not the only methods for furthering the search for self: Briggs felt the necessity for escape and meditation. For six months he turned his back upon his drawing board. He went to the Gaspé Peninsula and in that rugged but partly tamed country he painted and thought. Removed from the frantic New York scene, relieved from art

directors' pressures, he was able to see things in perspective. He came back realizing that an illustrator not only has to master his craft but has to live, to pile up experiences and become aware of the infinite aspects of our world. He came back prepared to document his pictures, to treat each one as a personal experience, to solve each problem in his own way.

Gradually the new outlook won him a following. He began working for *Redbook*, then *Cosmopolitan*. In 1944, the *Saturday Evening Post* editors, who had been watching his work, asked him to illustrate for them, and his work has been appearing in their pages ever since.

As might be expected of an artist with Briggs' zeal for improvement and powers of self-criticism, his pictures develop through struggle. Each picture is a battleground. He usually tries many quick composition sketches, discarding liberally. He has a fertile compositional sense, which sometimes leaves him torn between three or four attractive alternatives. But when he finally makes his decision, he begins taking photographs. He prefers to take his own and to use non-professional models, usually friends, neighbors and the townsfolk of Westport. He takes many photographs and makes drawings from the most promising. During this period several sessions of photography are likely to alternate with sessions of drawing. The pictorial idea gets hammered out blow by blow.

Briggs does not use the camera as a substitute for drawing. "The greatest convenience in using a camera," he says, "is that you can experiment with thirty to fifty poses in half an hour, whereas it would take five to six days to draw that many. The only trouble is that if you can't draw in the first place, it is more difficult to draw from photographs than it is from models, because photographs deceive you."

A favorite surface for a Briggs picture is a gesso panel. The final sketch is transferred to this in careful outline and the painting is done in oil or sometimes casein. It is not unusual for one or more partly completed or even completed paintings to be discarded before the obstinate Briggs standard is satisfied.

Some of his friends think that he is too exacting and that some of his best work finds its way into the wastebasket. Actually, in spite of the dogged pictorial battles he fights, he draws with great ease and spontaneity. His line is swift and sweeping and alive. It is perhaps something of a pity that, in the process of painting to completion, the spring and simplified strength of his line tends to be obscured.

The Briggs pictures bear the stamp of his personality but it is not a rubber stamp. There is no set Briggs composition, no repetitive Briggs types, no formulated color scheme. On the other hand, they are not full of violent surprises. The differences between pictures are noticeable but unobtrusive. They are the work of a man who is still investigating; who realizes that discovering oneself is a continuing process and is only too willing to consider it a lifework.

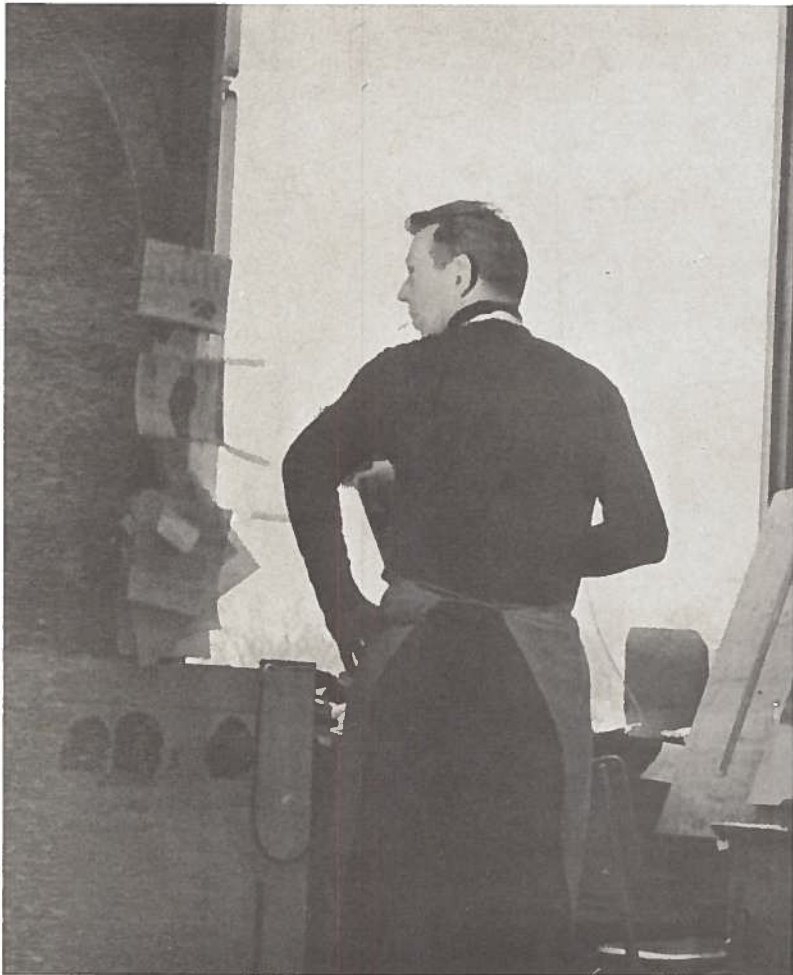


Austin Briggs at home

Most of Austin Briggs' waking hours are spent in this studio, built over the two-car garage connected with his home in Westport, Connecticut. The great north window looks out over rolling fields to a distant hill. A built-in radio-phonograph furnishes music whenever he wishes it. The bookshelves contain an assortment of art books and a collection of such reference magazines as the *National Geographic*, *Graphis*, *Life*, etc.

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In a bleary-eyed early morning moment, Briggs stands silhouetted against the north window as he checks photographs for an assignment posted up on his impromptu bulletin board. The deadline is bound to be close at hand. Leaning against the wall are agency roughs and Briggs' own sketches. The telephone will ring frequently during the day, as he confers with his agent and the art directors of such publications as the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Good Housekeeping*.



Lunchtime! A hearty Briggs bellow down the stairs to the kitchen brings the Briggs' maid, generously proportioned Fanny, to the foot of the stairs. In a few moments it will be hamburgers for all. The super-Briggs demi-physiognomy in the background is a souvenir of an Illustrators Society party, and suggests the somewhat self-conscious amusement with which he is able to view his rare attempts to take himself too seriously. The files stretch off into the studio to the right, and form a constant reference library not only for Briggs himself, but for many other local artists who have discovered that they contain a goldmine of material.

No, Briggs is not left-handed. This is a view of his studio reflected in the large mirror covering the wall at his back.





One of Briggs' basic principles is that sound research must underlie every illustration. On one occasion, when he received a story to illustrate which was set in South Carolina, he found it difficult to get the feeling of the locale from the reference material at his disposal. He thereupon packed up the family and set out for South Carolina to see what it was like in reality. Here Austin, Ellen and Lorna visit the author of the story, Philip Clark, and inspect a decorative tree in the neighborhood.



In spite of Briggs' constant concern with his work, he finds time for many a pleasant evening with his family and friends. This typical gathering in the Briggs' living room included Austin and Ellen; Lorna and Austin Jr., their two children; Mr. and Mrs. Al Parker; Mrs. Robert Hallock; and Mr. and Mrs. Robert Fawcett. The discussion is likely to range over a very wide field — from fast-moving shop talk and pointed criticism to such distant topics as psychoanalysis and the development of man.

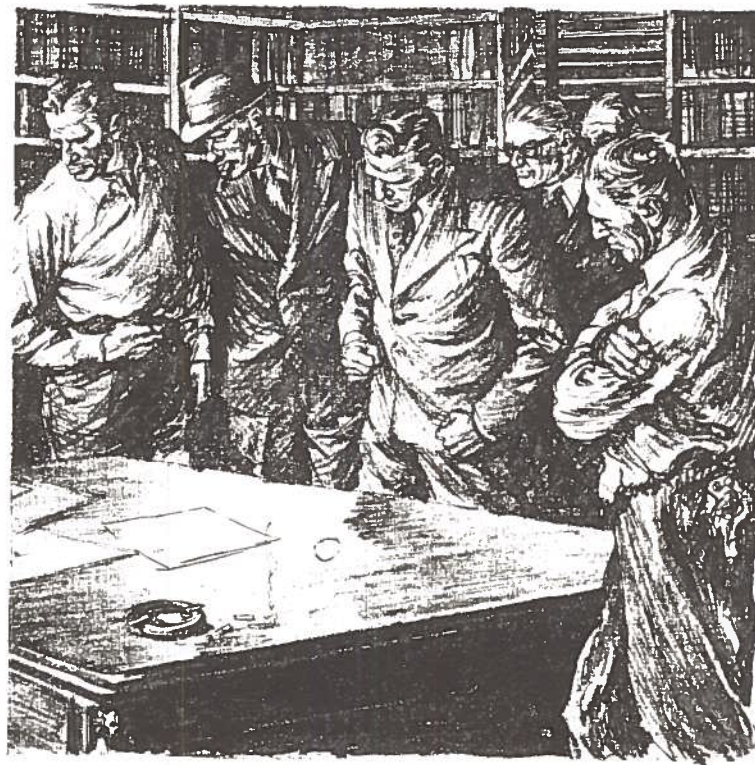
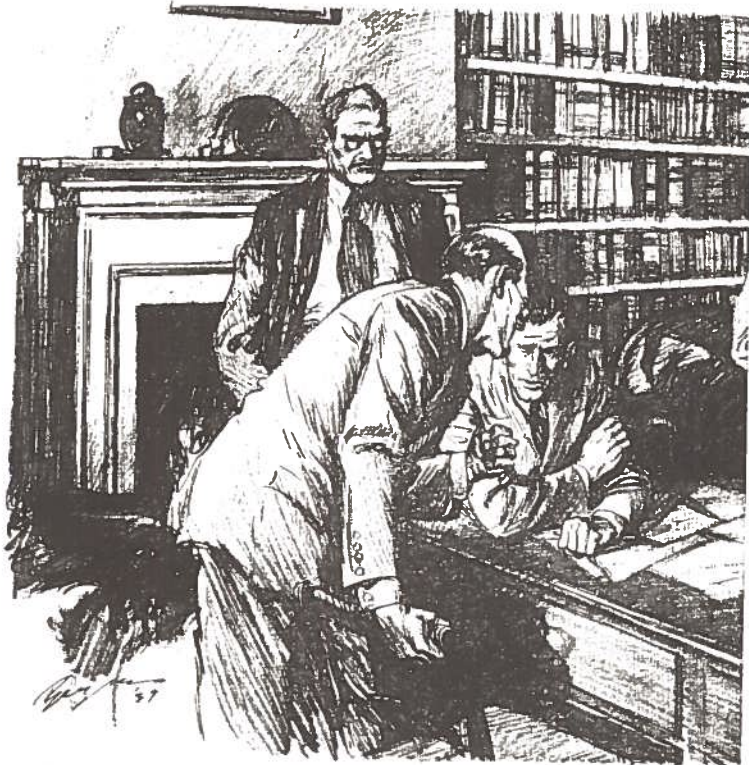


In his spare moments Briggs takes to sea as captain of the family sailboat. Here he mans the pump while Ellen Briggs, Austin's charming wife and constant companion, records the operation. The photographs of this excursion go into the files and eventually furnish reference material for an illustration. Austin, Jr. is busily splicing a line. Since they live only a few blocks from the shore, it takes no more than a few minutes to walk to the Cedar Point Yacht Club.

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Austin Briggs' early work



When I first came to New York I worked for *Collier's*, *Pictorial Review*, and *McClure's Magazine*. My black-and-white drawings of that period were fairly typical of those generally in vogue at the time. Then, suddenly, I discovered that the market for that kind of illustration had quietly faded away. I found an opportunity to do comic strip drawings, and these kept me going during some rather lean years. One day I went to *Blue Book* and was happily surprised to find they would give me all the work I wanted. While holding on to the comic strip job, I spent all the time I could on drawings for this magazine. I made 5 or 6 illustrations per month, and sometimes twice that many. My work for *Blue Book* stretched over some ten years, between 1935 and 1945. These were experimental years; I explored new compositional approaches, new techniques or variations of old techniques, and new manners of working with limited means. The fees I received from my drawings were largely plowed back into my work. I used more and better models, and better materials. This was my chance to learn, and I worked over drawings until they were as good as I thought I could make them. The drawing at the left is a typical pen-and-ink illustration from my early *Blue Book* days. The other two drawings on this page were done a few years later, in pencil on window shade cloth. This was one of the technical innovations I made during this period, and this particular technique became so popular that it was used extensively by almost all *Blue Book* illustrators for some fifteen years after my drawings first introduced it.



It is excellent and inconclusive to say that one must write from experience. What kind of experience is intended, and where does it begin and end? Experience is never limited and it is never complete; it is an immense sensibility; a kind of huge spiderweb of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness and catching every air-borne particle in its tissue. It is the very atmosphere of the mind; and when the mind is imaginative — much more when it happens to be that of a man of genius — it takes to itself the faintest hints of life, it converts the very pulses of the air into revelations. The power to guess the unseen from the seen, to trace the implication of things, to judge the whole piece by the pattern, the condition of feeling life in general so completely that you are well on your way to knowing any corner of it — this cluster of gifts may almost be said to constitute experience, and they occur in country and in town, and in the most differing stages of education. If experience consists of impressions, it may be said that impressions are experience, just as they are the very air we breathe. Therefore, if I should certainly say to a novice, "Write from experience only," I should feel that this was rather a tantalizing monition if I were not careful immediately to add, "Try to be one of the people on whom nothing is lost."

HENRY JAMES

Foreword

What this course can give you

As you read through the pages which follow you will discover that the course as a whole is divided into two major sections.

The first section considers illustration from a general and theoretical point of view. In this section we will discuss the illustrator's approach to his art; the thinking which determines his choice of a subject for a particular illustration; his method of collecting and evaluating the materials which will go into his picture; his considerations in organizing these materials into a composition; the technical procedures he follows in carrying his first idea into the finished rendering; and certain facts which he must always keep in the back of his mind, no matter what the job he may be doing.

The second section of the course shows how these general principles have received practical application in my own work. Through a series of examples, presented as Case Histories, I have attempted to demonstrate my thinking and procedure in preparing a wide variety of published illustrations. You will learn how I approached each assignment, and you will see how I solved the various problems which arose as I worked my way through to a solution.

When you have finished studying this course you will know in detail how I "make a picture." As we go along, you will pick up a number of technical shortcuts, and I hope you will find suggestions which will help you solve immediate problems. But my purpose in presenting this material is not primarily to hand

you a lot of technical gimmicks. It is rather to make clear a *point of view, a method of approach, a system of thinking and working.*

Although I am showing you how *I* make pictures — the way that I have developed through years of searching and experience — the last thing I want is to have you paint pictures like mine. That possibility does not worry me very much, however, because if you understand and apply what I am about to tell you, you will learn to make illustrations which can reflect only one personality — your own.

My best hope for this course is that it will help you find yourself, develop your own personal approach to illustration, and learn to solve your problems not in terms of how someone else has solved them, but in terms of your own personality.

You will probably notice that I have avoided the temptation to say to you constantly, "Do this and that in such-and-such a way." My method has been to say rather, "This is the way that works for me." If you like, try it my way. It may turn out that this is the best way for you, or you may find that some other approach is much more satisfactory.

If I have any one thing to teach, it is the truth that *there is no one way.* There are as many different ways as there are individuals. Your *own* way is the way for which you must search, and the pages of this course are dedicated to helping you along in that exciting and rewarding adventure.

The Illustrator and His Art

Illustration is a job

The first truth which any artist who wants to be an illustrator must face is that illustration is a *job*. The illustrator is a day laborer among the artists. He works hard, like a one-man ditch-digger, and he works alone.

His paintings are made to order. They must comply with certain definite, predetermined restrictions, and they must be delivered to meet deadlines. Often the illustrator must accept assignments which do not particularly appeal to him, and make pictures which do not reflect his personal taste and inclinations. In spite of these facts, he must maintain definite standards of quality. He cannot afford to wait for inspiration to supply him with the answers, but unless his work is fresh, original, and imaginative he will find himself without future assignments. In a very practical sense he is only as good as his last illustration, so he must work constantly to maintain a dependable level of performance.

For the successful illustrator, there is no eight-hour day. He must often work around the clock, conscious always of the fact that there are many others depending on him. The magazines and advertisers for which he works must be able to meet scheduled deadlines, or both they and he will be dead ducks. The illustrator's "workday" ends only when his picture is delivered and approved. His life cannot be organized on a nine-to-five schedule, nor can he count on a regular salary with time-and-a-half for overtime; but if he can meet the demands of his clients, his rewards, financial and otherwise, are considerable.

Obviously, the illustrator is a commercial artist. But this is not all he is — nor can his work be limited to the lowest requirements of his craft. The fact that he works within rigid technical restrictions and other limitations does not necessarily mean that he cannot create noteworthy pictures. After all, the great masters of the past were subject to restrictions in many ways as rigid as those the modern commercial artist has to face. If the modern illustrator is a good artist, he will make good pictures. If he is not a good artist, he would not be able to make good pictures no matter how great his freedom.

Craftsmanship and expression

In order to turn out a competent artistic job to meet the requirements of any client who may wish his services, the illustrator must be a sound craftsman. He must have mastered the various mediums he will be called upon to use. He must be able to draw anything in any position, and render it convincingly in any medium. He must be able to control values and work out pleasing color relationships. He must have learned how to organize the subject matter of his picture so that the figures have an easy and natural relationship, and yet create a forceful, coherent composition.

This part of his background — his technical competence as a craftsman — is not so difficult to acquire. The fundamentals can be learned through the courses of this school, or in any other good art school, or even independently. It is essential that the illustrator have this technical craftsmanship, but he cannot ex-

pect to master this aspect of his art in a few years and assume that he has nothing more to learn. All his life he will be discovering new methods of working, new ways to do things more efficiently and more effectively. The more he knows, the more he will be able to learn. The technique of his craft will be an unending source of fascination.

There is another aspect of illustration, however, which it is much more difficult to learn, and even more difficult to teach. After all, a mastery of craftsmanship is very much like a mastery of language. An illustrator must spend many years learning to paint, just as a writer spends many years learning to control language. Neither of them, however, will be very successful unless they have something to *say*, a worthwhile and significant idea to express.

Like language, illustration is a means of communication. Through his pictures the illustrator speaks to the readers of the magazines, newspapers and books of his time. His pictures will be exciting and successful only to the degree that he has learned to see, to react — and to express — what he observes and *feels*.

In the end, *the degree to which an illustrator can communicate emotion is the yardstick by which he is measured*. The world of art has always been filled with fine craftsmen, just as there have always been a great many individuals who could write intelligibly. But the artists who are remembered today — such men as Rembrandt, Michelangelo, Vermeer, Botticelli, to mention only a few — are remembered not primarily because they were excellent craftsmen, but because they had a new way of looking at things, a more sensitive ability to react to nature, a more effective way of expressing what they felt.

The work of a modern illustrator will be in demand for similar reasons. As part of his training he must have learned to experience life in the special way granted to the artist. When he comes to the problem of making a specific illustration for a story or an advertisement, he must be able to get into his picture something of his own personal feeling about the things and people he is portraying. He cannot create a mood, arouse the reader's curiosity, or whet the reader's appetite, unless he can communicate a mood he himself felt and reflect his own enthusiasm for the characters and the situation he is painting.

Therefore, in addition to craftsmanship the illustrator must have experience in living and feeling. His experience, of one kind or another, is even more important than the quality of his brush or his paint. Such experience must be both visual and emotional. This is not to say that he must have lived the life of a libertine or an adventurer. He need not have known hundreds of women to express the love and tenderness of his heroine, nor need he have visited a war-torn land to gain material which will help him express the wistfulness of a lost child.

The illustrator's most valuable experiences are of a very simple nature. The relationship between red and orange in a bowl of fruit, the quality of the greys in a weathered barn, the pathos of two lovers parting on a street corner as he passes by — such things as these are the materials of which his pictures are made.

It is too late for the illustrator to begin “experiencing” when he faces a specific illustration problem. He must bring to his task a vast background of emotional and visual material, assembled throughout a lifetime of observation and feeling.

The illustrator and his subject matter

In the paintings of China and Japan the artist hardly attempts at all to paint what he sees, but puts down exclusively what he *feels*. This is not such a mysterious approach, because the oriental artist believes the external form is merely a shell under which reality hides, and it is reality which the artist attempts to show.

There are a great many people — and a great many artists — who think that art is primarily an attempt to represent nature. Actually, art begins at exactly the place where the artist *departs* from an attempt to imitate nature. Nature provides the raw material of the artist. The visual world furnishes forms, shapes, value relationships, and color combinations which are stimulating to the artist. But art has rules and procedures which sometimes necessitate a complete departure from realism.

Paul Klee had this in mind when he said that “art does not render the visible, but renders visible.” The great English sculptor, Henry Moore, once wrote, “Because a work does not aim at reproducing natural appearances it is not, therefore, an escape from life — but may be a penetration into reality, not a sedative or drug, not just the exercise of good taste, the provision of pleasant shapes and colours in a pleasing combination, not a decoration to life, but an expression of the significance of life, a stimulation to greater effort of living.”

There is actually no such thing as a real duplication of nature in drawing or painting. Each individual sees the helter-skelter scene before him in his own way. Because of this, the objective facts will necessarily vary with each person who observes and interprets them. The creative artist does not attempt to draw nature as it “is” — but rather as it is transfigured by his imagination and feeling. If his work has enough talent and authority, he can make everyone think that his painting is a true and valid presentation of nature, no matter how far it may be from photographic reproduction. El Greco and Bonnard, for example, both distorted the figure, but for quite different reasons and in different ways. Yet each artist is convincing and exciting because he presents nature from a new point of view and gives us his own personal reaction.

If an accurate visual reproduction of nature were the chief end of the artist, he would have to abdicate to the camera. A photograph can do that job much better than the artist. Some artists attempt to compete with the camera, and year after year dozens of pictures are painted by men who are technically clever enough to come close to a literal reproduction of nature. But these pictures are dull and uninteresting because they lack the qualities of rhythm and emotion which the creative artist imparts to his work. In a real sense a picture is a vehicle through which the artist can express his own personality; and the ma-

terials he chooses from nature are valuable not in and for themselves, but as symbolic elements which can be manipulated artistically for purposes of expression.

The basic problem of the artist

Perhaps you felt as you read the foregoing paragraphs that these were indeed fine words, but that they had little practical application to the problem of making a picture for a magazine or an advertisement. Actually, they are the most valuable and practical suggestions I could make. Let me tell you how I arrived at these conclusions — not from reading books, but from personal experience.

My first success as an illustrator was made with pen-and-ink drawings. At the age of twenty, however, I found that the trend in magazine illustration had changed. The market for my kind of drawing had quietly vanished. Since I had nothing else to do I began to paint from nature. Very hesitantly I started doing landscapes, sketching whatever pleased me.

At that time I assumed that just because a landscape was attractive I could put a portion of it down on canvas, surround it with a frame, and have a picture. The results did not satisfy me, however. Gradually I realized that what I was painting was not a picture — but only a *fragment* of a picture. I discovered that nature provided only the raw material for an artist. Before this raw material could become a picture, it had to be changed and rearranged, exaggerated in line and form and value and color, organized into a composition. Otherwise it would not make a forceful and interesting picture that would express something of what I felt and wanted to get across to someone else.

Drawing should be an entirely personal expression. I make personal choices, taking what I want from the original scene and imposing my own taste and personality upon it. Any other artist, faced with the same problem and the same material, would arrive at quite a different result. The raw material in nature is infinite; each artist chooses what interests him most and uses it in a completely personal way.

The problem facing the modern illustrator is the same basic problem which has faced every artist from the beginning of time. This problem is to *select the right materials* from nature, and to *change and rearrange* these materials so that his picture will say what he wants it to say in an intelligible and forceful way.

I want to emphasize this point at the beginning, because I have found that so many bright art students devote all their time to *representing* nature on the canvas, copying their subject down as literally as possible. They concentrate exclusively on the visual and mechanical craftsmanship necessary to achieve this, apparently without realizing that the much more important problem of composition even exists.

Because composition is so fundamental, much of this course will be devoted to its consideration.

Selecting and organizing picture elements



1 Here is a street scene as I saw it from my studio window. Although my statement of the subject is obviously a very simplified one, I have made no attempt to eliminate or add material. This is what I saw as I looked out on the road. It is clear that only an accidental coherence or organization exists. One object succeeds another as the eye wanders through the sketch, but no obvious rela-

tionship exists between these separate elements. Now let us suppose we are to use this sketch as basic material for an illustration showing a figure walking through such a scene. The problem is to make a drawing that will best express the idea of the figure's motion.



2 In the sketch above I have chosen a single portion of the scene which is typical of the landscape as a whole. I have moved up on the scene and inserted the walking figure and a dog. At first you may think this is an excellent solution to the problem. As you study it more closely, however, you will see that it has many weaknesses. In spite of the fact that the walking action of the figure is indicated clearly, the picture has a static quality. Although the action states that the figure is moving, actually the various shapes in the picture organization are conspiring to keep her from motion. First of all, she is centered almost directly between the two trees on either side. Optically speaking, there is the same visual tension in front of the figure as there is behind. This tends to hold the figure in place. Furthermore, she has not passed the left-hand side of the house, and this shape tends to hold her back. The conical shrub above the wall, inserted as it is directly over the figure, acts like a weight to hold her in place. Incidentally, the dog is shown running along behind the figure. This too is a mistake — dogs just don't behave like that. Normally a dog would run along in front of the figure. Let us see if we cannot improve this sketch to increase the idea of movement through the scene.



3 Now the girl has been properly placed so that she appears able to walk freely through the landscape. She is not centered statically in the composition, or held in place by objects which weight her down, or framed in place between larger, dominating elements. Notice that she has been placed almost at the point of an imaginary triangle formed by the horizontal line of the wall and the sloping line of the house roof. This triangle acts like a compositional spear which shoves the figure along on its way. Having already moved past the tree, she faces no further opposition to her progress. Finally, the dog runs in front, as is its nature. This composition is not by any means the only solution to the problem, nor is it necessarily the best solution. The two sketches demonstrate, however, that the miscellaneous elements in nature can be organized and related to increase and underscore the picture idea; or, on the other hand, that the same elements can easily frustrate your purposes, unless you know how to organize them to make them work for you.



Art directors' roughs are usually not intended to be absolute blueprints of the finished picture. They show the artist how the agency thinks the job should be approached, in a general way, and they contain the essential elements which the picture must include to do a selling job. Often the illustrator can suggest changes in both the elements and their arrangement for the final betterment of the picture. The art director's rough, above, came to me from the agency representing American



Airlines. In this drawing attention is centered on the porter. A check of current illustrations turned up half-a-dozen porters in luggage and train ads. When I pointed this out to the agency, they readily agreed that this cliché should be omitted. In my own drawing I have retained the other essential elements, but I have arranged them more effectively, characterized the figures better, and introduced such touches of human interest as the favorite pair of cowboy boots held by the youngest child.

Choosing the Subject

Advertising and editorial illustration

Basically, every commercial painting can be classified as either an advertising or an editorial illustration. There is a subtle difference between most pictures made for editorial use and those done for advertisements. The difference is chiefly one of emphasis.

Since advertising illustrations are designed to emphasize a tangible product or an intangible service, the advertising picture must be conceived with the idea of creating a desire for the product or service being advertised. This often leads to an emphasis on "things" as opposed to human beings. People are usually included in advertising pictures, of course, if only to give scale to the product, to show how the product is used, or to create human interest. Very frequently, however, these people in advertisements are expected to be little more than symbols representing human beings. If they are too individual or interesting, they will attract attention away from the product. Furthermore, the ad-men are convinced that the closer the character is to a stock type, the more easily people will be able to identify themselves with him.

Occasionally an agency asks me to create a hero who combines all the qualities of Lord Chesterfield, a man from Mars, and the nice young fellow who calls on the young lady next door. I refuse to attempt combining so many types in one character. A few months later, when the ad appears with an illustration by another artist, the standard male hero type is featured once more. He is a male of indeterminate age and unknown antecedents, but he is vaguely handsome and appealing. He features the exaggerated jaw line associated with strength and virility. His mouth is firm, but not stern; his eyes are blue. Week after week, month after month, this character appears in ad after ad, selling everything from zippers to air travel.

I can't paint a stock character with any pleasure. I usually try to turn such commissions down, explaining to the agency that I don't think it will do the company represented any good to run a picture like that, and I am equally sure it does my reputation no good when I succumb to temptation and turn out an illustration containing such clichés.

Don't misunderstand me. I am under no illusions about commercial art. I paint pictures to earn a living, and naturally I never turn down a job if it is possible for me to do it well. But when I attempt a picture like this it always turns out badly, simply because I hate the types I am drawing every minute I am working on them. Since I do make pictures to earn money, I try not to do bad pictures that will harm my reputation.

Pictures should be fun to do. If they aren't fun they won't be good, and if they aren't good they won't sell. For this reason it sometimes pays to refuse a job that you know pretty definitely is not for you. It is true that from time to time I do paint pictures I hate — just for the money — but I regret doing it every time. These are always the worst pictures I turn out.

The problem of the cast-iron cliché rarely arises in connection with editorial illustration, because here the emphasis is quite different. As opposed to the emphasis on things and types in advertising illustration, editorial pictures stress convincing characterization and dramatic relationships between human beings. That is one reason why most established artists prefer to do story illustrations, even though advertising pictures often pay more money. Editorial illustrations provide the artist with an opportunity to use all his imagination and ability.

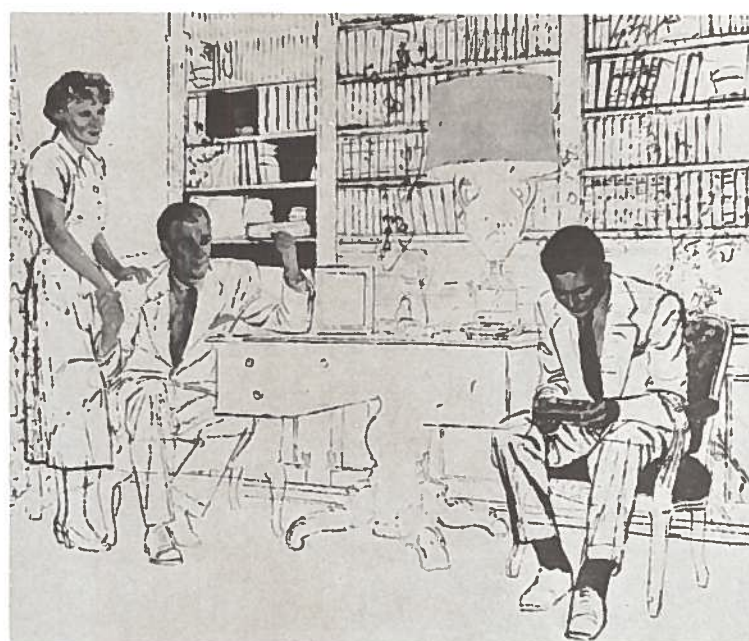
Later on, when we come to the consideration of specific paintings in the Case Histories, we will discuss the differences between these two types of illustration in more detail.

Choosing the Subject

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This illustration was intended to sell very expensive Swiss watches. My first reaction on seeing the art director's rough, shown above left, was that the interior indicated does not reflect the taste or wealth of families who could afford to buy these watches. Furthermore, the rough concentrates all attention on the boy; I felt the parents' reaction would also have strong human interest appeal. In addition, the bric-a-brac shelf hanging over the boy's head seems to weight him down with a suggestion of doom. On the right is a stage in the finish of my painting. You can easily see the changes I made in handling this subject. The background now serves to unify the



picture, instead of merely cluttering it up. An appropriately elegant interior is suggested. The repeated accents of the books echo the emotional excitement of this moment. The characters in my painting, though perhaps less elegant than the people in the rough, are more like the people the average reader knows. For this reason they have more reader appeal. Actually I have retained all the elements, and even the basic composition, which the rough presented. I have reworked them, however, to do the job more effectively.

Analyzing the problem

Every commercial picture, whether advertising or editorial, is made to do a specific job. Before doing anything else, the experienced commercial artist finds out exactly what the job is, and what the restrictions are. This process of analyzing the problem soon becomes instinctive.

These are some of the questions the artist asks and answers: Is this to be a picture for advertising or editorial use? If it is an advertising illustration, is it to stress the product, tell a story, or present an idea? If it is an editorial picture, will it serve as a cover, a major illustration, or a spot? What audience is the picture expected to reach — a mass readership, a specialized technical group, or a highly sophisticated audience? What effect is the picture expected to have? Is it intended merely to present a product or an idea for indefinite future reference? Or is it intended to develop immediate action — in other words, persuade the reader to go out today and buy the product, or turn his eyes immediately to the story text and begin reading?

What are the technical restrictions? Is the picture to be in full color or in black and white? What medium would present the idea most satisfactorily? What size is the finished reproduction to be? Would it be better to make the original the same size as the reproduction, or larger, or, conceivably, smaller?

What considerations of policy are involved? If this is an advertising picture, is it to be one of a series for which a general stylistic format has already been established? Does the client have certain recognized taboos? If it is an editorial picture, what editorial policy is involved? What is the general character of the



The agency had originally intended to view this illustration through the screen of a graph, as is suggested by the faint lines in the rough at the left. I persuaded them to take the graph symbol and feature it in the copy block, where the idea could be presented much more effectively. I then tied in the arrow in the symbol with the diagonal lines on which I built the composition in my painting, shown below. By moving up closer on the scene, I made it seem less cold, more personal. This also enabled me to show an interplay of personalities in the foreground. The unmistakable American Airlines symbol at the right of my painting, plus the neat, businesslike Airlines official, serve in a more subtle way to do the same job the "American Airlines" sign does in the rough.



Whether your principal problem is to secure more calls within a given territory or to expand the coverage of individual salesmen, air travel supplies an economical and logical solution. For, as many alert companies have already discovered, air travel is the only means of transportation that enables you to increase the efficiency of individual effort without increasing the cost. And today, as always, that is the surest path to profit. Let American's flagships show you that air travel is good business because it gets business.

America's Leading Airline **AMERICAN AIRLINES**



The father in the original agency layout seemed to me too small to be noted by the casual page-flipper. I therefore decided to move up on all the figures in order to dramatize their relationship. The headlines and text speak of human values which could not have been projected otherwise. An upward movement was gained by



emphasizing the boarding ramp perspective and by cropping the top of the picture. The composition of the finished art makes it easier for the prospective air passenger to grasp the idea intended. The entire picture is now more tightly knit. My attempt was to make each shape relate to the others in an interesting fashion.



It seemed clear to me that in this case the agency layout failed to illustrate the headline. Instead of saying "Going places," the agency comp said "Coming from." To make the intention of the layout more clear, I invented a gesture for the foreground figure which expresses clearly the fact that he is departing. Compositionally the picture tells the story simply; the eye is directed immediately to the hero.



This is accomplished by two simple devices: 1) His head is centered at the point where the perspective lines converge. 2) A strong horizontal line — the tail line of the plane — is run directly in back of his eyes. This line is in direct contrast with the upright gesture of the figure, and demands a sort of "X marks the spot" attention from the observer.



In this case I felt the most important thing was to show the expression on the boy's face. To do this, I moved closer to him. The problem of concentrating attention on him was solved by making his head the center or hub of a compositional wheel. The other elements are organized in a radiating pattern along the spokes of this wheel. In keeping with the subject, this is a rather busy composition, but it is simplified and controlled by the strong silhouettes of the carousel shapes. These frame the boy, and help focus attention where it belongs.

magazine, and how must the picture be slanted in style and handling in order to make it seem at home with the other illustrations by other artists which will appear in the same issue?

Most of this information is provided by the agency or the magazine art director at the time the assignment is made. If the artist is unacquainted with other advertising of the client, however, or with the magazine, he will usually find it best to study the problem carefully himself. Then he will have a much clearer idea of exactly what audience he is trying to reach, and he will find it easier to decide what approach his picture should take.

Even before the artist has a very definite *visual* idea of what he is going to paint, he already knows what his subject is going to be about in a general way. He has decided what the *emotional* content of the picture will be. Most effective pictures, whether for advertising or editorial use, try to get across one single positive "message." Usually this idea can be summed up in one sentence. A picture might show that "travel by air is faster and more efficient for the busy executive." Or it might make the observer feel that "something horrible is going on here — it looks like murder." Or it might be intended to make the reader say to himself, "This looks so good I'd better get some on my way home tonight."

The *message* of the painting is part of the basic information which the artist must have before he begins to turn it into a picture idea. He then knows, even before he takes his pencil in hand, that he has to reach a certain audience with a specific idea, working within certain limitations of size, medium, style, and handling, and that his job must be finished by a predetermined deadline. With this information established in the back of his mind, he can sit down and work out more definitely the picture he is going to make to fill these requirements.



THE FIRST RIDE *makes all the difference!*

MANY AN ADULT TODAY has the same reservations about air travel that he once had about the carousel. Remember how quickly your doubts were dispelled? No sooner was the first ride over than you wanted to go again. That, too, will happen after your initial Flagship journey.

But unlike the merry-go-round which you soon outgrew because it never took you anywhere, air travel can serve you for the rest of your life, bringing you within easy reach of people and of places impossibly distant by other means of transport.

The first ride makes all the difference! See for yourself how doubts take off when you do—on a Flagship.

Americas Leading Airline **AMERICAN AIRLINES inc.**

Choosing the Subject

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Working with the agency "rough," or reading the story

If the artist is making an illustration for an *advertisement*, he is usually given a rough sketch by the art director of the agency. This sketch or layout will contain all the basic selling information which must be included in the finished painting, and show the general approach which the picture is expected to take.

When the artist is making an illustration for a *magazine story*, he is sometimes given a sketch by the art director of the magazine, or the art director may indicate the subject he thinks would make the most acceptable illustration. However, most magazines permit the experienced artist to analyze the problem from scratch. In that case, the information which would be included in the art director's rough, in the case of an advertising illustration, is instead included in *the words of the story*. Since the question of approaching an advertising assignment is discussed later on, we will consider here the more difficult and subtle problem of how the artist handles an editorial assignment.

The first step in making an illustration for a story is to read the story carefully from beginning to end. This may sound like elementary advice — but it is surprising how often artists turn out illustrations which must undergo serious revisions or be redone completely, simply because the pictures contradict basic facts of the story. The most valuable possession the commercial artist has, aside from his talent and technique, is time. Any time lost through carelessness results in loss of income, and frequently means serious jam-ups on other commitments. Therefore, let me repeat, it is important to know the story thoroughly.

I read the story through the first time just as any other reader would, with nothing in mind except pure entertainment. I try to forget that I have been assigned to illustrate it. When I have finished reading it, however, I begin to analyze it carefully. Did it entertain me and hold my interest? What scene stands out as the most exciting and dramatic in the story? Is there any single scene which seems to symbolize the story as a whole?

Today the usual magazine story has only one major illustration. Any additional picture normally takes the form of a spot drawing. Almost the only exception to this is the serial, which in the first installment may require two to four illustrations. Therefore in his major illustration the artist must try to: 1) present the leading characters — particularly the heroine; 2) establish the mood of the story; 3) get across some idea of the major story problem or situation.

In deciding what scene he will choose to paint, and how he will handle it, the artist must always have one consideration in mind: *His chief job is to stop the reader and make him read the story*. He can do this in a number of ways. His illustration, for example, may present a mood so unusual or appealing that the reader will wish to stop and read the story so that he can enjoy this mood vicariously. Or his illustration may present characters so interesting that the reader will be curious about them. Still another possibility is to present characters so like the reader that he or she will want to find out what happened to them.

A fourth approach would be to stress action — action so exciting or provocative that the reader can't wait to see how it all came out. A fifth possibility is to picture a familiar type of setting so believably that the reader will turn to the story in the

hope of re-experiencing a pleasant incident in his life. On the other hand, there are many illustrations which make no attempt to present a specific story incident or a real setting, but are content to serve primarily as attractive page decoration. These illustrations depend on awakening pleasant associations in the reader's mind, thereby leading him or her into the text.

I think that probably the most successful illustrations — and by "successful" I refer to those illustrations which persuade most people to read the story — I feel that the most successful illustrations deal with *basic human feelings and experiences*. Pictures built around such fundamental themes as love, hunger, fear, death, etc. (or any variation of such themes), are certain to have wide appeal. The ever-present "clinch," the eternal triangle situation, situations involving danger and imminent death — these and dozens of other related subjects turn up time and again in popular fiction, just as they do in real life. It is safe to say that the more basic the theme presented, the wider and more sympathetic an audience the picture will find.

Many a beginning artist, anxious to avoid clichés, feels that such themes are trite. They are — in the sense that they are the common experience of humanity. The more trite the *basic theme* of your picture, the better. The cliché to worry about and avoid, however, is the *visual* cliché. In dealing with a basic theme I search for some subtle variation which will present the old theme in a new light, and give it a freshness of approach and feeling which will make the reader believe that this experience, common as it is, never happened before in exactly this way.

All comedians know the truth of the saying that "an old joke is best." But it would be a very poor comedian who would try to tell the same old joke over and over again in the same words, with the same names, the same characters, the same background. Just as the comedian is always in search of a new slant, a new angle, a gimmick that will make this joke sound like a story he has just invented and is telling for the first time, so the illustrator must find a new approach to the old situation — a variation which will reveal that the old situation exists, but which will make it seem new and vitally important to the reader.

One way to infuse novelty into the situation is to clothe it in mystery. Even though my picture is intended to illustrate a love story, I try to inject as much mystery as possible. The reader must always wonder, "What is going on here? How is this going to come out?" I am convinced that *the quality of mystery which arouses curiosity in the reader's mind is the most important factor in leading the reader into the story text*. As you read through this course you will notice a variety of technical devices which I use from time to time in an attempt to increase the sense of mystery in my illustrations and pique the reader's curiosity.

Occasionally I choose a situation which has basic appeal, and yet is not truly representative of the story mood as a whole. In this case I try to inject some of the general story mood into the particular incident chosen. For example, if the story is essentially a sad one, and the incident I have chosen to illustrate is gay, I purposely reduce some of the gaiety so that the reader will not be misled. In my opinion the illustration should always play fair with the reader and reflect the nature of the story accurately.

Begin where you're most sensitive

Why one illustrator chooses one scene from a story, while another paints a completely different situation, can never fully be understood. The reasons lie buried deep in the artist's personality, and are frequently as unknown to him as to others.

In my own case I try always to choose the scene which *means most to me*, if it qualifies as a suitable illustration on other grounds. I begin where I am most sensitive. When I find that scene in any given story which I too have experienced in an emotional way, that is the situation I usually choose to paint because it is the one I know most about. The more the situation means to me, the more meaning I can give it for others.

Often the story setting is one with which I am not familiar. To know this background I must burrow through books and files and see it through the eyes of other people. But some aspects of the story I always know and feel instantly. If the characters meet and fall in love in some strange land, I know at once how they *feel* and I can convey their emotion in my drawing. The plot complications which lead the people in the story to be happy, to be afraid, to fall in love, may be strange and unfamiliar to me; I accept the motivations if they seem reasonable. But what I concentrate on — what interests me most — is the *emotional experience* I share with them as a human being.

Often I am permitted a good deal of freedom in choosing the background against which I will stage my situation. Even when the background has been described in detail, there is still room for choice of viewpoint, lighting, and incidental props. Here again I select and present the setting on the basis of what is most interesting and appealing to me personally. The material I use may be exciting to me because it is something I have never experienced before — or, on the contrary, because I have had personal reactions to some of the objects, colors, or arrangements involved.

The business of the artist — and of the illustrator — is to see the common everyday experiences of people in a new and fresh way, and to show them as though they were being presented for the first time. Since each of us is a unique individual, if we are

truly aware of our experiences and the world in which these experiences take place, we cannot help presenting the old theme in a fresh way. Unfortunately, however, most of us tend to see things through others' eyes. We relate our own special experiences to the standard experience pattern of our fellows, and for this reason we tend to fall in the cliché.

Suppose we were to illustrate a scene involving an umbrella. We have all seen dozens of pictures showing people holding open umbrellas over their heads in the rain. Another picture of the same sort would present little that was new, and it would not be particularly exciting to paint. Yet many illustrators would go right ahead and paint the cliché — simply because it has cut such a deep groove in their minds that they can hardly conceive of an umbrella in any other way.

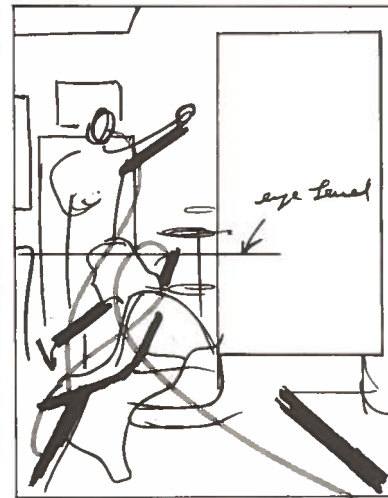
How could the umbrella be included in a picture so that it would attract attention and make people look at it from a fresh viewpoint? One way might be to present an interior scene, showing an umbrella left open and standing on its top with the handle sticking up in the air. This would offer exciting possibilities. We have all noticed an umbrella in that position, at one time or another; it would strike us as a novel and interesting presentation if we were to see it properly used in a painting.

This technique of showing objects in unusual positions or combining objects not ordinarily seen together in order to attract attention and stimulate interest is one which the Surrealists have used to excess. It is, however, a useful device for the illustrator — not in order to be sensational, but chiefly and more importantly to make the reader see the common objects which surround him as though for the first time.

In my day-to-day living I keep an eye out constantly for new ways of seeing the world in which we live. Over the years I have built up a mental file which contains hundreds of thousands of visual memory notes. As I read a story I project it on the screen of my mind, and realize it in terms of my memory images. Very frequently I find that this scene demands some cherished object, or personality, or effect which I have long wanted to include in



Occasionally a story seems to offer nothing in the way of good material for visual presentation. After racking my brains for a way to handle this assignment, I came across a single line which mentioned the heroine waiting at a railroad station. With this incident as a starter I developed an illustration idea which I hoped might interest readers. By posing the girl in a provocative way and inserting the man at the right, I have suggested that this scene might represent a "pick-up." The other characters and props were invented and designed to generate as much pictorial interest as possible. Basically the situation is derived from the story; the man *did* meet the girl at a station. But beyond that, the entire scene was my responsibility.



In illustrating this opening installment of a *Post* murder serial I was faced with the fact that nothing much happened, visually speaking, in this first part of the story. I was more or less forced to use my pictures to introduce the characters and set the scene. My main illustration, therefore, attempts to depict the two major characters very clearly and to suggest through the handling of the setting and the props just what kind of people they are, what their social position is, and what kind of relationship they have. Aside from characterization, the picture depends upon organizational structure for its interest. The average reader, of course, will hardly sense that there is any structure. The diagram at the right, however, will make clear how this planning takes his eye into and around the major storytelling elements.

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a picture. The fact that it holds unusual interest for me will stimulate a handling of the picture as a whole which will make the scene more alive, more convincing, more interesting and provocative for the reader.

The difficult story

Not every story offers ready-made material for illustration. Very often it is difficult to find a single scene which expresses the story mood and still provides enough dramatic appeal to attract a wide audience. Many stories, while excellent in other ways, simply don't develop pictorial situations.

In illustrating such stories the artist must often create his illustration almost entirely from his imagination. Several examples are illustrated on the preceding page. In the first instance there was no good scene in the story, so I used a few lines about a railway station as an excuse to make up a new scene of my own which I felt would attract the attention of women readers.

The second illustration was evolved from the blurb which accompanied the title rather than from any single incident — or even line — in the story itself. This was the opening installment of a murder serial in the *Post*, and it was devoted very largely to establishing the mood of the story and introducing the characters to the reader. I felt it would be a good idea to follow the author's lead by using a quiet picture which would provide a suitable foil for the melodrama which was to follow.

The literary idea vs. the pictorial idea

Occasionally an ambitious young artist comes to me bursting with enthusiasm. "I've got a swell idea for a picture," he announces. "I'm going to show a fight between a couple of men in a bar."

This is not "an idea for a picture." It is a literary idea — not a pictorial idea. A literary idea states the situation or the action or describes the characters — in *words*. Before it can become "an idea for a picture" — a pictorial idea — it must be translated into picture terms. It must be conceived in lines, patterns, forms, lighting and color. These must be arranged to express mood and action and conflict.

Even when the situation is stated in graphic terms, and therefore *does* become a visual idea automatically, the mere fact that it exists pictorially does not mean that it is *the* picture idea which best illustrates the situation. Very often students make the mistake of feeling that simply because they have expressed the situation in visual terms, they have therefore illustrated it adequately. But when one stops to realize the many different viewpoints from which the action might be seen, the possible differences in pose and relationship of forms, the differences in lighting effects which might be achieved, etc., it is obvious that the mere statement of a scene in visual terms chosen more or less at random is not enough. A variation in any one of these factors could produce an entirely different effect.

Therefore the illustrator's job is to express the literary idea in pictorial terms — but he must exhaust the possibilities for expressing this idea in a graphic way, just as a writer considers a variety of words and phrases when expressing an idea. It is not enough merely to *say* something in words or paint; the problem is to get across exactly the shade of meaning required with precisely the right force.

The world of words and the world of paint

It is important for the illustrator to understand the difference between the world of words and the world of paint. Anything which can be described need not be drawn. It is the business of the artist to *amplify* and *particularize* the literary idea.

To illustrate the difference between describing a scene in words, as compared with the way the same scene is described in paint, let us attempt to describe the situation in the picture shown on Page 99. Perhaps the writer would say, "The light, with its unfrosted bulb, dangled from the wall as though torn violently from its place. It cast eerie shadows throughout the room, and fell harshly upon the lifeless figure on the bed".

Although the scene stated in these words is obviously the same as the scene shown, and the mood of the description is similar, the picture expresses the situation with a detail the author probably did not visualize. Even if the author could have described the scene in the minute detail with which the picture presents it, noting the character of the bed, the play of light and shadow along the tucked-in sheet, the exact position of the sprawling figure, the precise design of the light socket, the nature and position of the other furniture, the radiator, etc., it would have taken so many words that the reader would put down the story in frustrated annoyance. The artist, however, can present the scene so that the reader can grasp the situation at a glance.

To do this, he must take the author's vague words, which might refer to any room at all, in any city throughout the country, and turn these generalized references to a "room" and a "bed" into a *particular* room and a *particular* bed. Often the author's words provide little more than a springboard for the imagination of the artist. He must then bring this scene and situation down out of the airy realm of words and present it as a factual scene in some world of reality. Taking whatever objects the author has mentioned or described, he proceeds to add other appropriate props or even people which will help him get across the situation and the mood of the story.

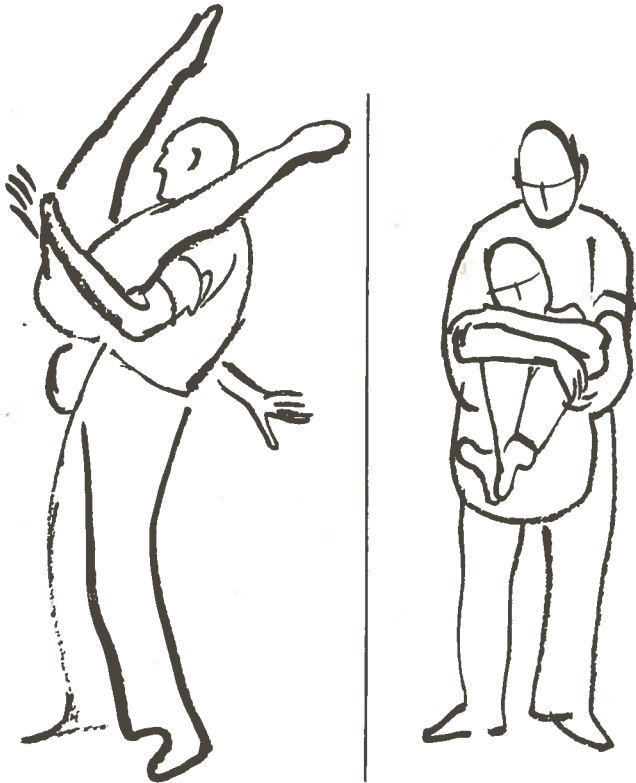
It is obvious that the artist cannot be satisfied with a literal translation of what the author has said, turning words into paint without much consideration for their meaning. The artist has a creative job to do — he must make visible that which, frequently, has not yet been seen even by the author. Although he must not contradict any direct factual statements the author has made, often he must supply the greater part of the information which goes into his picture.

In one way this makes illustration harder than if the author had gone into great detail, because it places so much responsibility on the artist. On the other hand, it frequently makes it possible for the artist to do an illustration which is a fine work of art in itself, even though the story illustrated is fabricated out of the most hackneyed trivia.

The illustrator and empathy

The word "empathy" is a ten-dollar word for a quality which can be worth a million dollars to the illustrator. Empathy, as Webster defines it, is "imaginative projection of one's own consciousness into another being."

The illustrator must be able not only to read the author's words and picture in his mind's eye a scene which no one has ever seen before — and picture it in graphic terms; he must also



These sketches are intended to illustrate the tremendous difference between a simple verbal statement and a simple visual statement. Suppose the story line reads, "He picked her up from the ground." It can be seen instantly that, although both the drawings above illustrate the story line in a general sense, each one is completely different in its implication. The drawing at the left, considered as a shape, is violent; the one on the right is placid and almost actionless. The whole point here is that one cannot be satisfied merely to make a drawing which literally illustrates the words. One must understand and express not only the literal meaning of the words but also the whole context of the character and mood. The drawings at the right illustrate the same point. Suppose the story line reads, "They were quarreling." It is apparent that both drawings illustrate the line. The first drawing makes it appear that this is

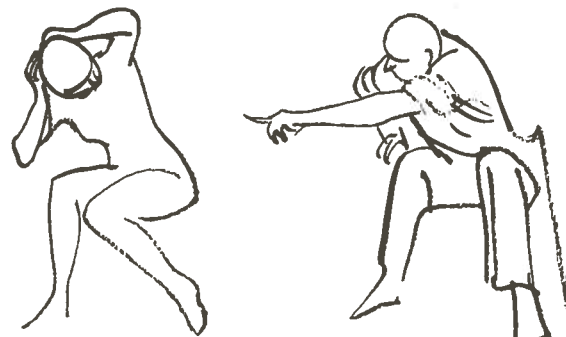
be able to read the author's words and feel what these fictional characters are feeling — and know how to project these emotions in graphic terms.

The illustrator must know what emotion *feels* like. Unless he has experienced love and hatred and desire and fear, he will never be able to portray them. At the same time he must know how people *look* when they are experiencing such emotions.

Every good illustrator is something of a "ham" actor at heart. He is ready at a moment's notice to step into any role an author can invent, and play the part of any fictional character. When he reads a story the scene and the action rise up real and three-dimensional before him in imagination; he is the hero and the heroine and the villain all together and all at once. He feels what each of the characters feels; and at the same time, in passing, sees their gestures and their facial expressions.

The success of the illustrator depends in large part on his ability to project himself into the characters, moving along within these other bodies, feeling their feelings. At the same time he retains his detached, visual objectivity as an artist, so that he can study how these characters appear. Because the illustrator has lived within his characters so intimately, he sometimes feels that he alone is able to express adequately what they are feeling and how they are moving. For that reason he occasionally models himself for a number of the major roles, particularly if he finds other models are unable to capture exactly the shade of action and emotion he feels the scene demands.

In my own case, I usually prefer to play the role of director.



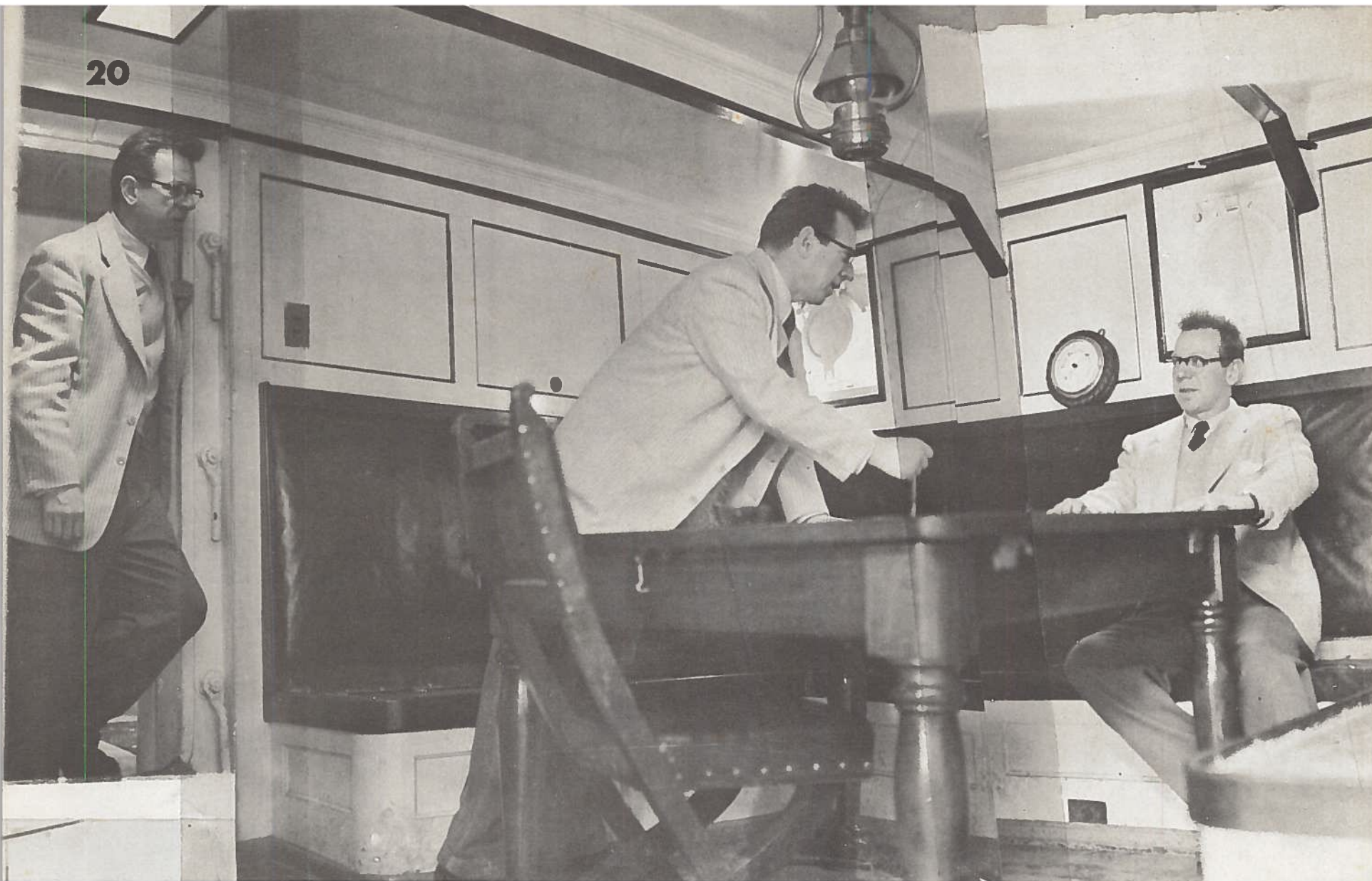
a quiet, reserved sort of misunderstanding. The shape, viewed as a whole, is simple, with few lines at sharp angles to each other. Furthermore, the threatening gesture of the man's fist is contained within the softer outline of the shape as a whole. Only the jagged lines forming the base of the shape depict the intensity of the emotion. In the second drawing, however, the division between the individuals is expressed by their visual separation. One shape is played against another, with strong contradictory lines formed by the man's accusing gesture and the girl's recoiling figure. It is obvious that this is a violent, enraged argument. The picture must always make clear what the real mood of the situation is, even if the actual line illustrated does not express it.

If I can explain to my models what the emotional content of the scene is, I can let them act the role and bring to it their own contribution of imagination and personality. We will discuss the question more fully when we come to posing the model. But I want to stress at this point the importance of entering the scene yourself, as an illustrator, and taking part in the action.

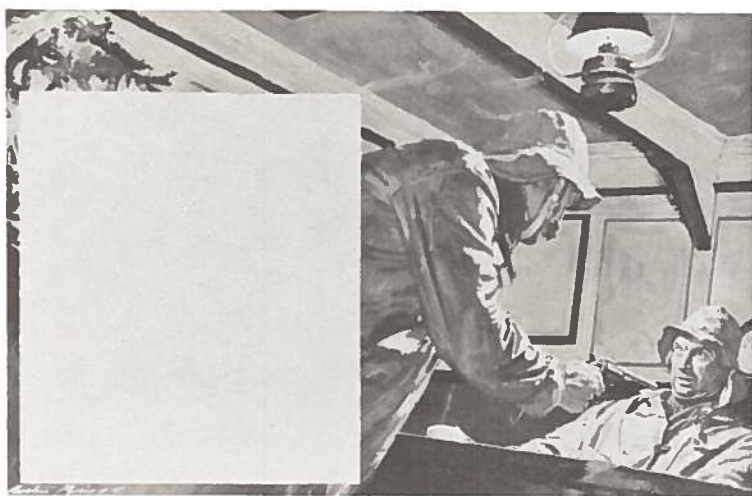
The lack of empathy — of being able to project oneself into the scene one is portraying — is one of the greatest weaknesses of student work. The "clinch" scenes drawn by most beginning illustrators, for example, are not convincing as clinches. The man is not actually kissing or caressing the heroine — he is merely near her physically, and the proximity seems to mean nothing in particular to either person involved.

The same observation could be made of almost any other kind of action as portrayed by an artist who attempts to record it without feeling it. The man faced with the gun in a horror illustration does not appear frightened — he is merely undergoing a curious facial contortion. The child in another picture does not look wistful — he merely seems uncomfortable for reasons best known to himself.

The ability to *feel with* one's characters is the secret of making people come alive on canvas, the secret of making them aware of each other in a world which belongs purely to them. Without this ability, the illustrator's characters will seem stiff, stilted, self-conscious, and able to do nothing more than reveal the artist's own puzzled embarrassment at his inability to make them walk, talk, act, and react like human beings.



Empathy — the ability of an illustrator to feel what his characters must be feeling — is fundamental to an illustrator's success. He need not be an actor himself, but he must at least be able to "ham" the parts when the need arises. The composite paste-up above was put together from three photographs carefully cut out and mounted on a piece of illustration board with scotch tape and masking tape. I had been assigned to do a scene in the captain's cabin of a four-masted schooner to illustrate a *Post* story. To get background material I drove to the Marine Museum in Mystic, Connecticut. There I found this interior, which I was assured resembled the setting I wanted. I had no models with me, so I decided to act out the parts myself. By setting the automatic timing device on my Rolleiflex, and making time exposures, I was able to take as many shots as I needed. The picture could have been composed against any one of the three walls shown. Since I had no idea of how I would finally handle it, I posed against each wall and then took corresponding pictures confronting myself with the gun. The paste-up shown above was therefore one of three possible variants. When I got home I posed models for the roles, but these original photos gave me background detail, an accurate sense of scale, and also helped show the models what I had in mind for the action. The finished illustration appears below.



The best way to collect material is to go and see for yourself. Sometimes, however, that is impossible. Then it is important to talk to a reliable eye-witness who can give you first-hand information. When *Look Magazine* asked me to do an illustration showing Gurka warriors attached to the British Army attacking the Germans during the North African campaign of World War II, I obviously couldn't have painted the scene from personal experience. I could, and did, get in touch with the author of the story, who had taken part in the action himself. In addition to word descriptions and photos, he gave me a number of Gurka props, such as the fascinating knife shown here. This detailed information enabled me to turn out a convincingly authentic picture.



Collecting Materials

An illustrator cannot make a picture without collecting materials, any more than a bird can build a nest without collecting twigs, or an engineer can put together a car without assembling the necessary parts. This statement should seem obvious, but it is a fact which many would-be illustrators have a tendency to overlook. They are so anxious to finish their illustrations and show them to an art director that they do not take the time to carry through on the basic, and often laborious, job of research. It has been said that it is the artist's job to "invent." That statement is true as far as it goes. But it is clear that in order to

invent there must be a starting point. That starting point — that original stimulus — must be found in the world outside oneself, the objective world of reality. When I was a youngster wandering through museums in starry-eyed wonder, I tried to figure out why many of the pictures I saw there were so much better than most of the pictures in books and magazines. I finally reached a conclusion which contributed a great deal to my own working procedure. The gallery paintings were often better not only because the artists were often better, but also — and sometimes chiefly — because

Some artists seem to have looked at nature once and decided there was nothing more to see. I get awfully tired of paintings of water, for example, which appear to be based on a knowledge of water gained by seeing it once. Water, like everything else in nature, has all kinds of moods, textures, colors, etc. It is important to look for the specific aspect of water which is most suitable for the particular illustration on which you are working. These photos from my files are inserted here to emphasize this point.



Collecting Materials

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the artist had gone to the subject in nature. His research had consisted of *living the experience himself*. He was excited and absorbed by what he saw taking place before his eyes. He had his being in the scene or situation so completely that he felt compelled to reproduce it.

Somehow paintings dreamed up out of memory images alone never have the immediacy, the conviction, the impact, that those done from the situation itself are likely to have. This is true partly because we seldom retain a very accurate impression of what things really look like. Even such a simple object as a bunch of grapes will look entirely different when drawn from memory, as opposed to a drawing made from life.



The grapes in the memory drawing are likely to be arranged in an arbitrary triangular shape, whereas the real bunch will probably be somewhat the same shape as a mass of bread dough. The grapes in reality will not be one color, but many—although this particular bunch may be chiefly yellow-green. The stems may appear to be magenta, or blue, or pure black, or pure umber. If the grapes are resting on apples, they will probably be sitting right up on top of the apples, and not nestling down among them as one might imagine. More than likely the real fruit will not be arranged “artistically” at all, but bunched off to one side of the dish.

When an artist actually goes to nature and takes a careful look at an object, he usually finds that it is quite different from what he had remembered or imagined it to be. We tend to think and invent in stock images. Often we draw what we vaguely remember having seen other artists draw, in spite of ourselves.

Jean Charlot tells an interesting story about one of the medieval artists who painted a green tree with a fugitive color which, as it aged, turned to a rich brown. Later painters saw this brown tree and began to paint their trees brown. This went on for generations. The story is amusing, but there is a lot of truth in it. Until recently almost everyone thought the great masters had painted with a brown tonal sauce, and for many years a painting had little appeal for the majority of people unless it followed this “brown” convention. Today the old masterpieces are being cleaned by experts, and it has turned out that they were done originally in bright, glowing color. Only the aging of layers of varnish, and the accumulated dirt of time, hid the jewel-like quality of the originals. But what of all the later painters whose pictures have no real color, who foolishly painted everything in browns thinking they were following in the footsteps of the masters?

This is an obvious demonstration of how easily we are influenced by what we think others see. The only way to find out what nature is really like, and to discover how we feel about

nature, is to go out and take a look for ourselves. The French Impressionists of the nineteenth century created a revolution when they put this idea into practice. They picked up their canvases and headed for the open fields, where they could study nature without being too influenced by the conventional approach of the museum painters who preceded them.

They discovered that nature is always new and different. Nature does not produce an “average” object or a “normal” object. In nature there are always variations from the norm — all sorts of interesting accidents differentiate each object from its similar neighbor. Man is constantly trying to reduce nature to symbols, leaving out these interesting personal qualities. We often say that two people or two objects are “as alike as two peas in a pod.” That expression sounds reasonable to someone who has never examined two peas in a pod. In reality, each pea, in subtle and happy ways, is quite unique and different from its neighbor.

It is a great mistake to try to discover the ideal by taking an average. The understanding artist will realize that *the universal is more often hidden in the particular*. Furthermore, it is the accidental, the personal, the different, that makes an object interesting. The illustrator who wishes to present a fresh view of the scene he is depicting will be more concerned with the *peculiar* qualities of the particular objects he is using than he will in finding out how he can eliminate these qualities. Seeing and recording variations from the “normal” or “average” will inject a quality of reality into your pictures and raise your drawings from trite expressions to the level of true illustrative art.

When I insist on the importance of seeing and knowing every object in the picture and recording it from nature, it may sound as though I am advocating photographic realism. This is not so. What I am trying to point out is that the artist must *see* everything before he can *react* to it. And if his reaction leads him away from a realistic depiction of the object, he will be able to depart from reality honestly. He will slur or underplay the natural object because he feels it should be painted that way, rather than because he is ignorant of the object and is merely making a good guess at what it might look like.

I constantly see paintings which owe more to ignorance and laziness than to sensitivity. Look through the magazines. They contain numbers of paintings where the landscape or background has been slapped in carelessly and apologetically. The artist apparently felt it was worthwhile to make a careful study of the major figures and objects in his painting, but he couldn't be bothered to go out and take a look at the less important parts of his composition. He took a chance, and “faked” them, because he felt that no one would pay much attention to them anyway. This is a point of view with which I have no sympathy. To my mind every part of the picture is as important as every other part. The artist must know every object he is presenting if he is to do an honest and convincing job.

The particular talent of the artist is his trained ability to *see*. Therefore it seems to me that all paintings should be made of objects the artist has *seen*. These objects may be literally recorded, or they may be altered through distortion or exaggeration. But in any case, they should be manifestations of things seen, and presented so that others may see them in a new and interesting way.



Stories are frequently set in exotic locales which the artist could hardly expect to visit in time to make his illustrations. In that case he must work from whatever scrap he can find, and from such real settings of a similar nature as he can locate close to home. My story in this instance was enacted in a typical French restaurant. It occurred to me that the Lafayette Restaurant in the Hotel Brevaort, New York City, had been decorated authentically in that manner. I went there and made this sketch for reference purposes. If you live near a large city you can almost always find background material that will serve at least as a basis for the scene you are to paint. A search through books and magazines will provide the additional touches of authenticity needed to make the setting convincing. Synthesizing a foreign background in this way is, for me, one of the "fun" aspects of illustrating.



Whenever possible I study the action or activity I am illustrating, so that I can be sure my characters look and move as convincingly as possible. When I found it necessary to make a spot involving two fighters, I went over to a gym in the nearby city of Bridgeport and spent the evening studying and sketching the fighters as they trained. I worked very rapidly with a brush-pen, trying to capture typical poses, gestures, attitudes. This is one page of sketches from among the many I made that evening. I probably would have made photographs as well if the light had been better.



Finding the right setting is often the most important step in making an illustration. When I began working on the picture, above left, for the *Saturday Evening Post*, I was not sure whether I should view the scene from inside or outside the house. I looked around for some time until I found the interior shown above right, which seemed to offer fascinating possibilities. The windows were perfect areas for spotting my characters. They reminded me of the niches used to set off and accent Renaissance sculpture figures. The sketch to the right indicates how my modern heroine might have appeared if she had been set in such a niche. It amuses me to adapt technical devices of this kind, which originated centuries ago, for my own use. They are just as effective in helping solve today's problems as they were when first invented.



Re-creating the setting

This method of going directly to nature for materials and working as closely with reality as possible has been my standard procedure for many years. I think of myself somewhat in the role of a stage designer. I try to re-create, as nearly as possible, the physical setting of the story situation I plan to paint. In doing this I begin to experience some of the surprise, suspense, or drama of the story. *People* take the place of *dialogue*. *Chairs, tables, rooms* — physical objects — take the place of abstract *words*. Since the artist is primarily a visual person and is stimulated by *seeing*, these real objects begin to suggest ways of arranging themselves into pictures, and reality itself becomes the chief influence in the development of the picture idea.

Whatever vitality and freshness my pictures have stems from this kind of research. By absorbing myself in all the important — and trivial — details of the scene I become excited enough so that the creative impulse and compulsion which must accom-

pany the painting of a good picture are successfully aroused.

Often the story will suggest places and scenes which are very familiar to me, and then I try to imagine the action of the story set against these places as a kind of backdrop. If I don't know of a place similar to that described, or if I have no photographs or drawings of such a place, I sometimes go out and spend a day or so wandering around semi-aimlessly trying to find an appropriate setting. Once I have found something which will serve at least as a springboard toward the development of such a scene I arrange the protagonists in the action just as a stage director arranges the actors on his set. I imagine them in different positions, and I try to find the arrangement which will get across the action in the most direct, understandable way. At the same time I try to relate them to each other and to the background in a manner which will help support my conception of what the mood of the incident I'm illustrating should be.



The above photo is one of many I made in preparing to illustrate a story about the death of Abraham Lincoln. I rented an authentic dress of the period and found the model I wanted. From the five and dime store I got some cloth roses which I attached to the model's dress and hair. This rose decoration was in keeping with the style of the period, and it made this particular dress a unique creation. During the posing one of the roses came unpinned. I thought this touch might suggest that she



had come to Lincoln's aid in such haste one of the roses had fallen off. Unfortunately, I was so taken with the idea that I overdid it. In the finishing painting I included two roses instead of one, thereby overemphasizing what should have been a very minor detail. Never try to fake costumes if you can possibly work with clothing of the period. When it is impossible to get an authentic costume, pose a live model in clothing as nearly like it as possible.

Period settings

Frequently the illustrations I am called upon to do are set in a different land in a time long past. Then I am forced back upon museums and libraries for information. I collect all the data and scrap I can, in the hope that I will be able to capture the mood and style of the period rather than in an attempt to locate precise factual material that I can copy down verbatim.

It is more important to make the picture *feel* authentic than to make sure that it is literally authentic. For example, there have been periods when the scale of the rooms and furnishings was such that the people were dominated by their surroundings. The characteristic quality of the furniture was its size and mass. In other periods the people themselves dominated the settings in which they lived. Capturing a proper sense of scale relationship will do more to convey the mood and atmosphere of a period than any amount of concentration on decorative detail. Learn to understand the *spirit* of a period. Then it won't be necessary to imitate details; you can make them up yourself with the assurance that they will be just as "authentic" as anything you could copy down.

If you make the mistake of including objects, decorative designs, costumes, architectural details, etc., which do not belong in the period and are obviously anachronistic, you are sure to hear about it. The most prolific letter writers in the world are magazine readers. Hundreds of people apparently spend their entire time studying the magazine illustrations in the hope that they will be able to run down some minor error. When they find one, they take pen in hand with sadistic glee to inform the editor and the public of the artist's carelessness or ignorance.

"This rifle was not used in Kentucky before October, 1872," they will write. "The first one was imported from New York by Clarence Murphy of Lexington who left it to the Trollop family on his death in 1890." Or, "This particular chest was designed by Thomas Crump in Boston between 1789 and 1800, as the finials conclusively demonstrate. There is no instance of its appearing west of the Mississippi until long after the period indicated." The communications can be even more blunt. A post-

card will bring the editor such a simple sentiment as, "What makes you think this guy is an artist? He don't know the difference between a poodle and a water spaniel."

When the illustrator copies down objects literally, he must make every attempt to be completely authentic — after he has first made sure they belong in the painting at all. Sometimes, by turning into a furniture or costume designer himself, he can invent objects which are close enough to the general style so that they might easily have existed. In that case he can avoid criticism, if he does it well enough, and have the additional advantage of working with material which he has created for the specific purpose of doing a special job pictorially.

Experience it yourself

I can't emphasize too much how important it is to experience a scene that is to be drawn, or at least to come as close to experiencing it as possible. When working from someone else's scrap, one has to use it literally and blindly. There is no personal experience of the object — no living personal reaction to reality.

Even when I am working with a period costume, as in the picture showing the death of Abraham Lincoln, I am not satisfied to copy it down from scrap. I get a model, and have her dressed either in a costume I have rented for the occasion, or in a dress which comes close to that type of costume in general design. In this case I not only procured an authentic costume, but pinned artificial roses on it to make it a unique and more interesting expression. It was entirely authentic, but as far as I know a dress exactly like this had never been worn by a woman who lived in that day. I painted the dress my model was wearing. I reacted emotionally to the three-dimensional reality — and not to a photograph or a sketch of a dress worn in that period.

When I am depicting a period setting, I work not with the photographic and scrap material I can get together, but with an actual three-dimensional setting which I have located near my home. The architectural detail may have to be changed, the walls shifted around, the proportions exaggerated. But I am re-

acting emotionally to a three-dimensional reality — a real room in which people have walked and talked and lived — rather than to a strange and remote room far from my experience.

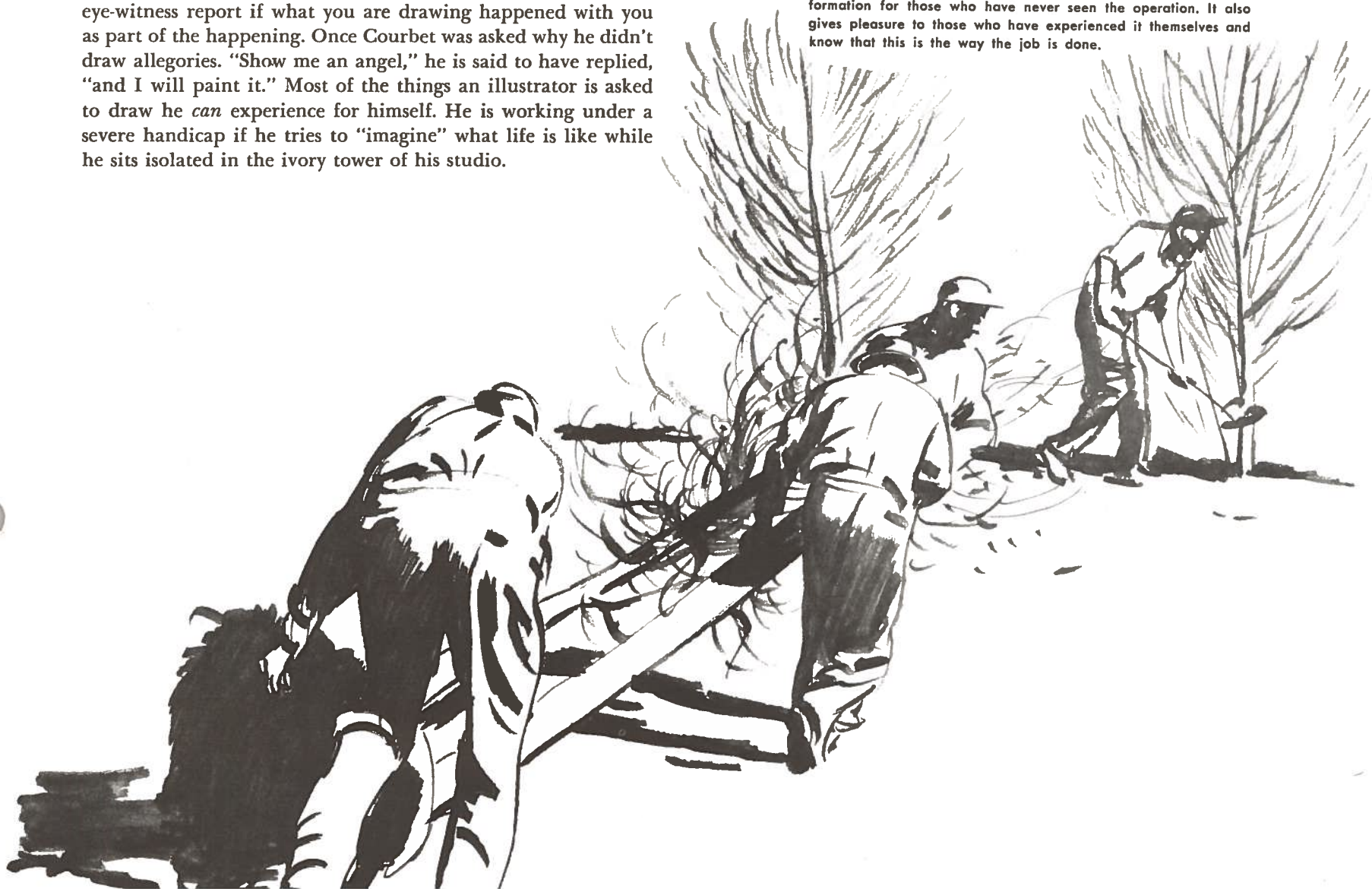
Oddly enough, the *facts* presented in an illustration are of secondary importance. It is better if detail is only suggested — because, believe it or not, the less detail the artist shows the more detail people will imagine. What makes the setting convincing is the artist's *feeling* about the objects he is presenting. This feeling is expressed, of course, in facts — in details of design, color, shape, lighting, and so on. But when the artist is in the presence of a *real object* he lets his feeling about the object help him select the facts that are significant and telling. What he eliminates are the details which he feels are unimportant or confusing. When he is working from two-dimensional photographs, or someone else's drawings, he is unable to do this because he does not have all the facts, from which he can choose those that are significant; he presents only a few facts simply because he has no real knowledge of the subject.

Never send an assistant for research material if you can go yourself. If you visit a museum with a room created in the period of your illustration subject, do not be content merely to photograph it or look at it. Try to get permission to walk through it, to sit in the furniture and feel the textures of the fabrics. If you are painting a speedboat racing across the water, it is a fine thing to see a speedboat racing across the water. You will be much better informed about the speedboat, however, if you can actually ride in it, than you will be if you are content merely to watch it from the shore.

It is difficult to make a painting convincing unless you know the subject first-hand. You must believe in what you are drawing. Your painting will have the authenticity and assurance of an eye-witness report if what you are drawing happened with you as part of the happening. Once Courbet was asked why he didn't draw allegories. "Show me an angel," he is said to have replied, "and I will paint it." Most of the things an illustrator is asked to draw he *can* experience for himself. He is working under a severe handicap if he tries to "imagine" what life is like while he sits isolated in the ivory tower of his studio.



Suppose you are planning to draw a picture of men planting a tree. It would be easy to fake the action, of course. But it is much better to go out and watch men doing the job. Then you will know much more about how it is done, and you will have a better chance to dope out an interesting, provocative approach to the subject. My finished drawing here combines two different steps in the procedure. It shows one group of men putting a heavy tree on a plank to carry it, while another man throws earth on a tree that has already been put in place. A drawing of this kind, based on first-hand, eye-witness experience, serves as a source of information for those who have never seen the operation. It also gives pleasure to those who have experienced it themselves and know that this is the way the job is done.



Collecting Materials

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When the question of sketches comes up, some commercial artists say, "No, I never make sketches except for a job." I personally feel that sketches done just for fun or for information are extremely valuable, because they offer an opportunity to experiment. With no job in mind, you can be as free as you please; there is no necessity to do something the public will like or understand. This drawing of people at the beach was made just for my own pleasure. When I analyzed it later, I found it had a new feeling and a new method of handling which I wanted to get into my work. Sure enough, I was able to use a very similar approach in illustrations I made later for *Town and Country*, shown on the opposite page. Free, experimental sketches like these keep me from getting caught in a rut of old tricks and mannerisms, and help me find a way to grow.

Notice the little things

Even though your illustration should picture a universal experience and deal with emotions which all human beings can feel, it should be presented in terms of a particular setting. The invaluable quality of the particular and actual is the fact that there is nothing else like it in the universe. Paradoxically, the more unique and personal the scene you are presenting, the more general the appeal will be.

Every illustration offers an opportunity to do the scene exactly as you believe it *ought* to look. There have been hundreds of pictures which have used the same background, generally speaking, that you will plan to use. The important thing is to get exactly the *right* background for *your particular story*. It is not enough just to draw *a* bar, *a* railroad station, *a* living room — the setting you use must be *the* bar, *the* railroad station, *the* living room. You can select the precise location better if you form a habit of examining things closely for exactly what they are. Learn to notice the small details.

Of course it is impossible to go out and search for the perfect setting every time you do a scene, without any idea of where you are likely to find what you want. An artist's memory must provide a great deal of material for every job he undertakes. His mind should file away images and impressions so that every story situation will call to mind a restaurant or living room or station platform which might be suitable as a background.



To make a believable presentation of something you must know as much about it as possible. I was unable to get the model and the calf together at the same time when preparing this illustration, so I went out to a farm and held the calf myself while someone else took photos. I can draw moderately well, but I couldn't have faked this activity because I wouldn't have had the slightest idea of how to pick up and hold a calf if I hadn't tried it myself, or seen someone else do it.

I take pictures or make sketches of everything around me which I like and think might be useful someday in making an illustration. I try to notice the hundreds of little objects I see around the homes of my friends and acquaintances. I memorize the interiors of places I visit.

No detail, no matter how small, should be overlooked. A friend of mine, for example, has ornamented the paneled wall around her fireplace with a group of antique cookie cutters of curious design. These I may include someday as part of a decorative background which will help raise an illustration out of the ordinary run and give it unique personality. It is a mistake, of course, to assume that unusual props, used indiscriminately, will save a bad picture. The magazines are full of dull pictures cluttered up with curious cookie cutters and every other odd contraption. It is only when such details are essential in setting the mood, placing the locale, or helping the composition that they add to, rather than detract from, the picture.

As soon as possible after I have seen a pose or an interesting arrangement of objects I get them recorded in sketch or photographic form. Whenever possible I sketch rather than photograph the object or scene. Although the demands of time and deadlines will not permit sketching everything, it is a fatal error to rely completely on the camera.

The advantage of making notes in the form of sketches is subtle but real. If you sit down and draw a doorway, a tree, or a tugboat you must study the object, familiarize yourself with it, and, in a real sense, possess it. As you draw you are forced to *see* the object and become intimately acquainted with it. That kind of seeing is quite a different thing from the seeing required to center the object in a camera viewfinder.





These two pages of sketches were made on a trip to Charleston several years ago. They started out to be objective and factual, but in some ways they became sort of fanciful. I can't stick to the factual long without personal reactions setting in and changing the objective facts. I'd probably be a very poor reporting artist. You will notice as you study my illustrations that I constantly utilize my sketches for background material as well as for other purposes. Some of the material shown here will probably turn up in a painting sooner or later. My pictures are based on my own experience, and these sketches are aspects of that experience.

The importance of going directly to nature



1 Some years ago I became very discouraged with my work.

2 I was studying the paintings of other illustrators which, in the beginning, was very helpful.



3 But my own work had no individuality. Every few months as I became aware of a new illustrator's work, my style changed. Not one of my pictures looked as though it had been painted by me. My ability to observe and learn from nature was dying from disuse.



4 Finally it dawned on me that I should get away from the influence of other artists and work directly from nature to develop my own personal reaction to the visual world. Having decided this, I went to the Gaspé Peninsula in Canada for four months. There I sketched any and everything — from nature.



5 During my vacation on the Gaspé I did this painting of sailboats. While painting many pictures like this, I began to experience a very personal reaction to forms and the play of light on them.



6 This landscape was done after my return. By now I knew that points of view borrowed from other artists were not suited to my temperament. Indeed they were damaging and antagonistic.



7 As you can see, I now began to realize a positive and individual reaction to nature.



8 My work became more alive and convincing and I knew that I was no longer dependent on other artists for a point of view. In a way, that painting trip to Canada was my declaration of independence.



9 While on the Peninsula I used my camera a great deal to record information which I believed I could use later. I was right, as you can see here. I painted this sample illustration upon my return from Canada with a feeling of confidence. In painting this picture, I relied entirely on my personal reactions to the subject and on my stored-up experience in actually observing and painting from nature.

Courtesy Woman's Home Companion



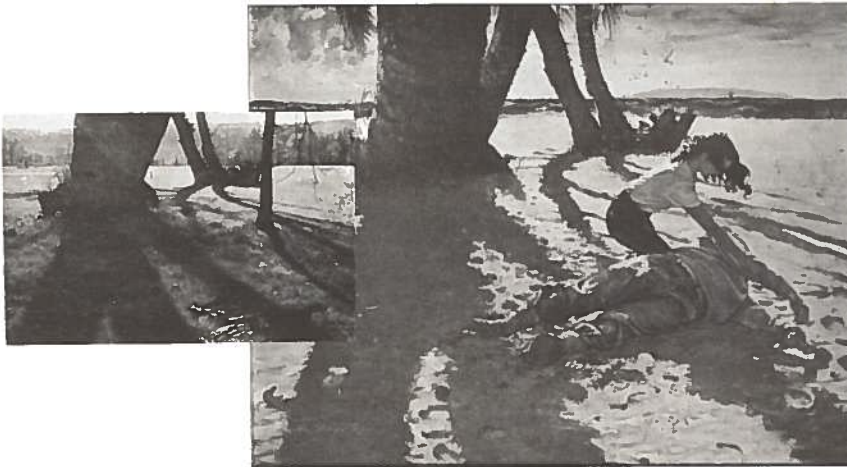
- 10 My studying began to pay off handsomely because many assignments I received required some landscape in the background. In doing this job for the *Woman's Home Companion*, I felt that I could see the actual sunlight and shadow on the men as they advanced through the jungle.



Courtesy Cosmopolitan Magazine



- 11 The sky pattern in this *Cosmopolitan* illustration is one remembered from my Gaspé trip.



- 12 Here is another example of the useful information you can store away in a photograph and eventually use. The shadow pattern in the photograph served as a springboard for the structure of this illustration for the *Post*. Notice the manner in which the figures follow this pattern. As a result, the picture appears to be "of a piece."



- 13 Here is one illustration from a serial done for the *Post*. The locale was Charleston, South Carolina, and for a long time I struggled to illustrate the story with the help of photographs and studio props. The job just wouldn't come off, so I went to Charleston and in a short time had plenty of information as well as a personal knowledge of the countryside.

By permission Saturday Evening Post © 1946, 1947, 1948 Curtis Pub. Co.



- 14 This picture was planned with the landscape of a nearby hill in mind. After I had worked out my arrangement, I moved my easel to the hill and painted directly from nature. The sky is as it appeared on the day I painted it and adds much to the mood of the picture. I heartily recommend painting on location whenever circumstances permit it — particularly if the picture is predominantly a landscape. Keep in mind, however, the necessity of integrating the figures into the landscape, rather than slavishly copying the landscape.





Three Approaches to Painting

The mere existence of a painting or a work of art presupposes three different factors: the subject, the artist, and the audience. Since art is essentially communication, it is to be assumed that the artist wants to communicate something about the subject to his audience.

In doing this, the artist can concentrate on any one of these three factors. He can concentrate impersonally on the *subject itself*. That type of painting is essentially representational in purpose. Or he can concentrate on *how he feels about the subject*. The chief end of such painting is aesthetic. Illustration,

on the other hand, concentrates on *the audience*; it is most interested in achieving audience appeal and obtaining a definite kind of audience reaction.

Representational painting concentrates on the subject

Let us consider first of all the question of representational painting. Here the artist is interested only in reproducing nature on his canvas as literally and accurately as he can. He tries to eliminate any personal feeling he may have about the subject,

and to overcome any weaknesses of eye or hand. With consummate craftsmanship he transposes the three-dimensional reality to his two-dimensional painting surface — line for line, value for value, color for color. His highest ambition is to produce a painting which will seem so real that we will be fooled into thinking it is the subject.

The history of art is studded with stories of men who succeeded in this difficult craft. There was a celebrated Hellenistic artist who painted grapes so realistically that the birds flew down to peck at them. There were Renaissance artists in Italy who painted landscape murals so convincingly that many who saw them thought they were looking through a window at the surrounding countryside. Various artists of the Dutch school rendered fabric and fur and fruit so magnificently that one is tempted to reach out and touch the painting to see if these things can be real.

We may pause momentarily and admire the skill of these great craftsmen, but the momentary excitement is soon over and we pass on unmoved, for the painting has communicated nothing to us that the real object would not have said better. In the end, a real apple is always more interesting than a careful copy of an apple, if for no other reason than that in addition to shape and color it has weight and volume and odor and texture, as well as good nourishing food value. Even the crunch it makes as one bites into it is an exciting and happy experience. The painted apple, however great the skill with which it has been done, remains nothing but — a painted apple. At best it is a *tour de force*, and nothing more.

This kind of painting has seen a considerable revival recently because so many artists confuse painting with photography. But in their competition with the machine, they are doomed to frustration. If reproduction of nature is the only consideration, the camera can always do the job better. It is true that the camera does have limitations which the artist can correct. It has only one eye instead of two, and therefore is likely to distort nature under some circumstances. Its film is not equally sensitive to all colors, and it may distort values. The area which is in sharp focus — its “depth of field” — is likely to be quite different from ours. But in spite of these limitations, it has an utter detachment, a completely impersonal approach, and a sensitivity to detail which no artist can emulate.

Few illustrators even attempt to copy nature in this impersonal way. The very character of their job, as we shall see, makes a purely representational approach difficult if not impossible.

Aesthetic painting concentrates on the artist

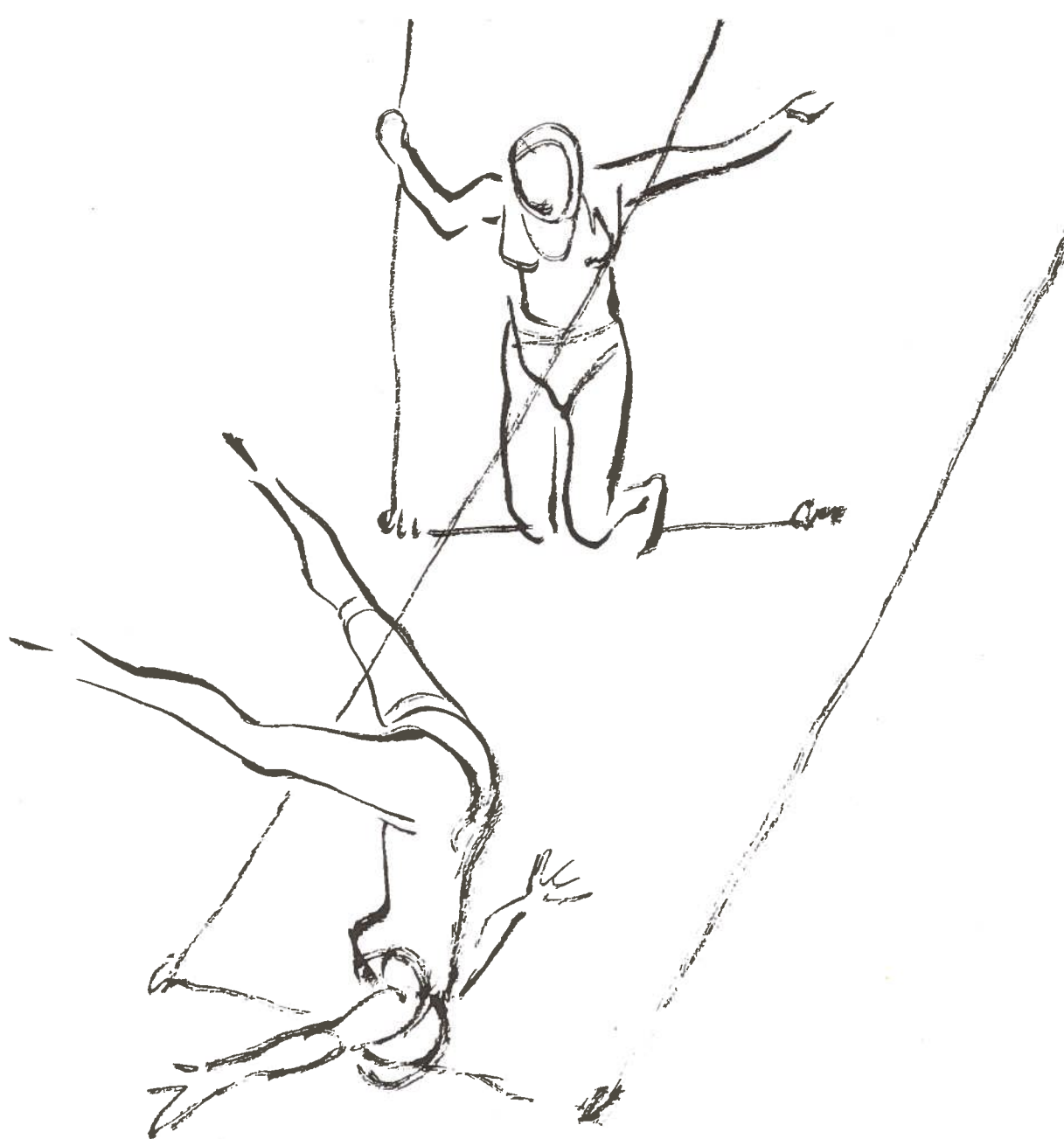
Most artists feel that they have some other mission in life than to serve as human cameras. They recognize that representational painting is a frustrating procedure. It is not only extremely difficult and actually unsuited to the nature of the materials, but even when it is successful it has achieved no very important goal.

They have much more exciting things to do. What the nature of this excitement is, however, varies with each individual artist. If he is not to concentrate primarily on the subject, he has two choices: He can concentrate on how the subject affects him, or he can consider how he plans to affect his audience.

Painting which concentrates on the artist and his reaction to the subject I have called “aesthetic painting.” This broad classification would include practically all serious painting which does not have a specific commercial job to do. It is painting which is created as pure art. Its purpose is not, primarily, to







affect the audience; and it certainly has no representational aim. It is created only to communicate how the artist himself feels about the subject; and its audience may be large or small, depending on how many people feel the same way the artist does.

The aesthetic painter begins with the conviction that *he* is more important than either his subject or his audience. The qualities of sensitivity and emotion and intellect which he brings to the canvas are of special interest to him. The primary source for his painting is not the subject, but rather *his own emotions and thoughts as they are stimulated by the subject*. The creation on which he is working is governed not by the restrictions of the subject, nor the practical requirements of an art director, but solely by his own personal taste.

All of us, far from being impersonal machines, are more accurately tangled bundles of nerves, emotions, sensitivities, desires, prejudices, hopes, fears, aspirations, affections, memories. Our eyes communicate the outside world to us more or less efficiently. But we can never look at any object without finding that a jangled chain of emotional and mental reactions has been set up inside us. Many of these reactions occur so deep within us that we are hardly conscious of them. Nevertheless, our attitude toward what we see is governed as much by what we bring to the object as by what the object brings to us. It is almost impossible to be completely detached and impersonal.

Every object in nature arouses some "instinctive" reaction in us. "I like this," we say. "I dislike that." From the first moment when we first became conscious of the world around us, we have made choices as to what is good and pleasing, or what is bad and unpleasing. Each choice we have made has conditioned all fu-

On these two pages are three kinds of drawing, each quite different in technique and purpose. The sketch on the opposite page began as a reporting job on how my son, Austin, Jr., looks; it soon gained poetic overtones. It is very difficult to be purely impersonal about an individual with whom one is deeply tied emotionally. By contrast, the sketches of circus performers have almost no emotional quality. They were done "at the surface" under very difficult conditions, and the chief emphasis here was on speed. The drawing below, of men working in the fields, is almost pure expressionism. It was spring, and I was overwhelmed with the earthiness of the subject. It seemed right that these figures should be crudely and heavily presented in a strong statement expressive of their relationship with the earth.



Three Approaches to Painting

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.

ture choices. In the end, we have established a vast body of prejudices and affections which we call "taste."

The artist, being particularly sensitive to visual experiences, has developed a particularly extensive group of prejudices about the various elements which go to make up the visual world. "Isn't this an exciting shape?" he remarks. "What a beautiful color relationship." Or he may exclaim, "Look at the way this line sings! Isn't that rhythm exciting?" Such observations as these are expressions of the artist's taste; they reveal what he likes and what he dislikes.

In the end, the kind of picture the "aesthetic" artist turns out will be governed entirely by his taste — his likes and dislikes. From the infinite material in nature he selects only those facts which have special appeal for him and which he finds unusually exciting. He combines these facts on his canvas in a way that, again, stimulates a new excitement and pleasure. If his painting includes an arm, he may exaggerate the curves of the arm out of all realistic proportions, simply because he finds special excitement in these curves and feels that they will create a new excitement in his painting in relation to other curves. His painting is a world apart from nature. It is his world, a world that he is creating, and within its borders he will establish the laws which he feels right and proper. He is the sovereign ruler here; nature and all else will abide by his own pleasure.

The aesthetic painter may be a person, for example, who has always found excitement in the moving quality of shapes as two-dimensional patterns. The movement and abstract rhythm of the edge which delineates the outer perimeter of a form may awaken pleasant visual and emotional reactions within him. He will therefore consult his subject with special concentration upon the shape pattern presented, and he may emphasize this quality in his painting by ignoring entirely such other qualities as volume, or values, or perspective, or textures, or colors. He can express best what he feels about his subject in purely abstract, linear terms. If the rhythm alone excites him, he may restrict himself to a pure calligraphic line of unvarying dimension. Or, if he wishes to suggest something of the three-dimensional volume, he may follow the contours of his subject with the sensitive caress of a brush line, now thick, now thin, suggesting delicately the variations in volume, light, and shadow.

Another artist may be especially interested in three-dimensional volume and mass. To him the play of light and shade over his subject may constitute its most exciting quality. He will likely express himself three-dimensionally, in values, concentrating on the realization of the form without consideration for textures or, perhaps, colors. A third man may ignore shape and volume completely — to him only the color seems of paramount importance. Whether he expresses himself in two-dimensional patterns, or three-dimensional depth, or even, conceivably, by means of a color organ, his art will reveal his personal reaction to color relationships.

There are few artists who concentrate on one painting element at the expense of all others. Most artists are more sensitive to some qualities of the subject than to others, however. These unpredictable and personal affections, plus their peculiar technical habits, constitute what we call "style."

In a world of free men, every artist is at liberty to paint as he pleases. Since none of us is completely unique (no matter how

unusual we are, there are bound to be at least a few other people who are rather like us), every artist, no matter how peculiar his work may seem to the majority, is bound to find some kind of audience. Very frequently, over the course of time, other people begin to realize that this artist who at first seemed so peculiar actually saw something exciting and meaningful. As we begin to look at the world through his eyes, we see what he was driving at. It turns out that he had a unique and valuable contribution to make — his own personal way of seeing things — and he eventually becomes established as a master and a prophet.

Illustration concentrates on the audience

It is obvious that every honest and creative artist looks at the world through his own unique eyes. He has his own personal likes and dislikes — his own taste. These will be apparent in his paintings, no matter how much or how carefully he attempts to hide them. That is the reason why it is impossible for even the most skillful forger to copy the work of another artist so perfectly that it will not, eventually, be detected.

The illustrator, like every other artist, brings his personal likes and dislikes to his pictures. It is true that he did not himself invent the scene that he is depicting. But he is not making a copy of someone else's visual idea; he is bringing into visual realization an idea that has so far existed only in words or in a very rough sketch. He is therefore forced to make choices, and in these choices his taste will be revealed. His own feelings, his own personality, is bound to find its way into his painting.

Unlike the aesthetic artist, however, who is free to concentrate on his own reactions and paint only for his own pleasure, the illustrator has a job to do. He has been hired to please, interest, excite, and influence a mass audience of millions of people. They must like his paintings, and they must react to them, or the illustrator will find himself beside the aesthetic painter, working for his own enjoyment on his own time. That fate has advantages, of course — but they are not financial advantages.

To do this job effectively, the illustrator must concentrate on the problem of pleasing and affecting his mass audience. This is both easier than it sounds, and harder than it looks.

The illustrator knows, first of all, that purely representational painting lacks the excitement and dramatic appeal needed for successful editorial illustration. Such painting tends to be stiff and lifeless. For editorial use it is a poor substitute for the photograph. This is especially true because the fast presses used in printing mass publications are usually unable to reproduce the subtlety such painting involves. From a practical point of view, the more simply the painter works, the better the reproduction will be.

On the other hand, he knows that the average person who flips casually through a magazine has neither the time, the experience, the patience, nor the taste required to appreciate purely personal or aesthetic artistic expressions. The average magazine reader is not looking for "art" at all. He is looking for an emotional jolt.

The emotions he wants to experience have little immediate relation with the more subtle and refined emotions which concern the painter. He is not interested in the relation of lines and shapes, the delicate balance of thrust and counter-thrust, the quiet vibration of two carefully adjusted colors. These things



affect him, of course, without his knowing it; and the illustrator takes advantage of that fact. But what the reader wants, and what the illustrator must give him, is some kind of *basic* emotional experience. The reader wants to be made to feel desire, fear, pity, hatred, shame, contempt, amusement, tenderness, etc.

The reader can do this only by *identifying* himself with the characters and action and atmosphere of the illustration. He thinks of himself as an actor in the scene portrayed. The more easily the reader can step into the picture, the more successful the illustration will be. Therefore the people in an illustration must look like people the reader knows, or would like to know. The backgrounds must look like backgrounds he has seen, or could imagine seeing. The experiences must be related to those the reader has had, or would like to have, or conceivably *might* have.

Obviously then, the illustrator cannot stray so far from his subject in nature that it becomes unrecognizable. He cannot create settings which are so far removed from the reader's experience that they are meaningless. Furthermore, even though the author is not always entirely sympathetic with his characters, the illustrator must *always* be. No matter what a girl has done, if she is the heroine of the story she must be physically attractive. In the same way, the hero, in spite of his failings, must have masculine appeal. This is true because the reader wants to

identify himself or herself with the hero or heroine, and for the period of reading the story at least, live out vicariously the events that the author is describing.

Just as the illustrator must idealize his leading characters, and exaggerate where necessary the evil of the villain, so he must attempt to raise the entire illustration out of this world into an idealized never-never land. Even though he may be using his own living room as background material, he will not paint it literally, as the camera sees it, but handle it so that it becomes the idealized room of the story, filled with the atmosphere and mood of the story. The illustrator must learn the trick of presenting his characters so that they seem convincing, but in such a way that they exist in a world of their own. He must envelop them in an air of mystery which intrigues and excites the reader.

In short, the illustrator is always attempting to create an illusion; to perform a feat of magic; to achieve a miracle of





imagination; to create a looking-glass through which the reader can walk into a world similar to his own, and yet more exciting, more intense, more ideal, and perhaps more terrible. It is a world of exaggerated dimensions, a world where emotional experience counts for everything.

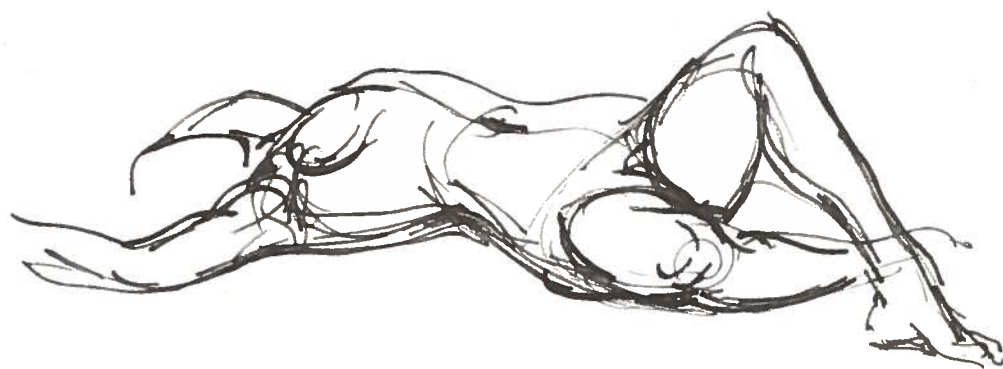
In creating this world the illustrator works with all the artistic devices of line, pattern, value, volume, color and texture used by the aesthetic artist, and he uses them with as great craft. But whereas the aesthetic artist paints with one eye on himself, the illustrator paints with one eye on his audience. The *effect on the reader* is what concerns him, rather than the essential aesthetic value of the painting itself.

Every technical factor is considered not for its own sake, as an aesthetic element, but for the part it will play in the final emotional result. Although the illustrator works close to the world of reality, he transforms his subject so that it fits into the world he is creating in his picture. Exaggeration and distortion are part of his technique, but these are used primarily for emotional rather than aesthetic ends. The illustrator is careful not to *contradict* nature so obviously that his statement is disturbing to the reader, but he is careful also to take from nature only those facts which will tell his story most effectively; and he organizes and presents those facts not with an eye to reproducing his subject, but with the intention of creating a new and more magical world for the reader's pleasure.

It is obvious that illustration, designed to arouse an immediate and basic emotional response, is quite different from purely aesthetic painting. An aesthetic painting, done as such, is expected to hang upon the wall of a home or a museum. It can be studied casually. It is something with which one will live day after day, or return to at leisure. It need not please an audience of millions; indeed, if only a few individuals find it meaningful and stimulating, it has achieved the artist's purpose.

For these reasons the aesthetic painting can be much more subtle and personal. Its effect may be cumulative, its message revealed only after long acquaintance. These facts do not by any means suggest that the magazine illustration is under less of an obligation to be a work of art than such a painting. Both may be works of art, but art intended to fulfill entirely different functions. No one demands that an aria from "Porgy and Bess" sound like a string quartet of Beethoven; nor has anyone yet suggested that a short story of O. Henry would be more justifiable if it were recast in the manner of T. S. Eliot.

Many of the greatest paintings of the past were illustrations. Today illustration has become more specialized and more functional in purpose. It is expected to appeal to a wider and perhaps less experienced audience. But it is still true that the final limitations of the illustrator as an artist are within himself — limitations of his own talent and taste. The illustrator who is a good artist will still turn out good paintings, in spite of the fact that he does not enjoy all the freedom of the gallery artist.



Designing the Picture

The essential preliminaries

In many ways, making an illustration is a much more complex and demanding job than making a painting which is expected to have purely aesthetic value. The aesthetic painter can choose a surface of any size, shape, or material that appeals to him, and work in any medium that he feels will best express his idea. The extent to which he follows the subject he has chosen as a point of departure is again a matter of personal choice. If he likes, he can indulge in a variety of technical effects and tricks which are useful and interesting in a wall painting, but which would probably harm, rather than help, a painting done for purposes of reproduction. In short, the aesthetic painter concerns himself entirely with his own personal problems, without any consideration or restriction which is not of his own choosing.

The illustrator, on the other hand, must combine the knowledge and talents of a dramatist, stage designer, costume designer, director, stage manager, lighting expert, photographer, research man, advertising man, art director, salesman, diplomat, accountant — and painter! Every illustration he makes involves all these varied skills and talents. Unless he is accomplished in these fields, his technical abilities as an artist will be of little financial value to him. It is true that what he finally sells is a painting or a drawing — but the actual art work is only the final culmination of many different kinds of activities which are completely foreign to the purely aesthetic painter.

The illustrator must be a *dramatist* in order to sense which situations will have most dramatic appeal for the widest number of people, and in order to present these situations with the greatest force and conviction. He must be a *stage designer* to create a setting for his characters which will underscore their personalities, create the proper mood, strengthen the action portrayed. As *costume designer* he is responsible for every detail of dress, make-up, grooming, etc. In dealing with contemporary characters he must even “guess ahead” of current styles, so that his women will be dressed in the style of the moment when his picture appears in the magazines, months after it was painted.

Once he has settled on the scene and action he is to illustrate, created the setting, designed the costumes, and assembled the props, he must serve as a *director* who can cast the roles involved and then direct the action so that it will be most natural and convincing. As *stage manager*, he must see that all these different elements are related and assembled together at just the right time. He must be a *lighting expert* to make sure that he will have exactly the effect the drama involved requires. Whether the mood of the scene demands completely flat lighting without any visible source, or stark contrasts of dark and light, or any variation of these — he must be certain that he has complete control of this highly important factor.

Still further removed from his job as a painter are the variety of other skills mentioned. He must be a *photographic expert*, to record the scene he has created. He must be a *research man*, so that he will know how to check the authenticity of every detail he includes in the picture. He must have a good understanding

of advertising and be a *practical psychologist*, so that he will know what will make people who see his pictures react as he wishes them to, and so that he can understand why the representatives of magazines and agencies insist on things which seem picayune or highly annoying to the aesthetic artist.

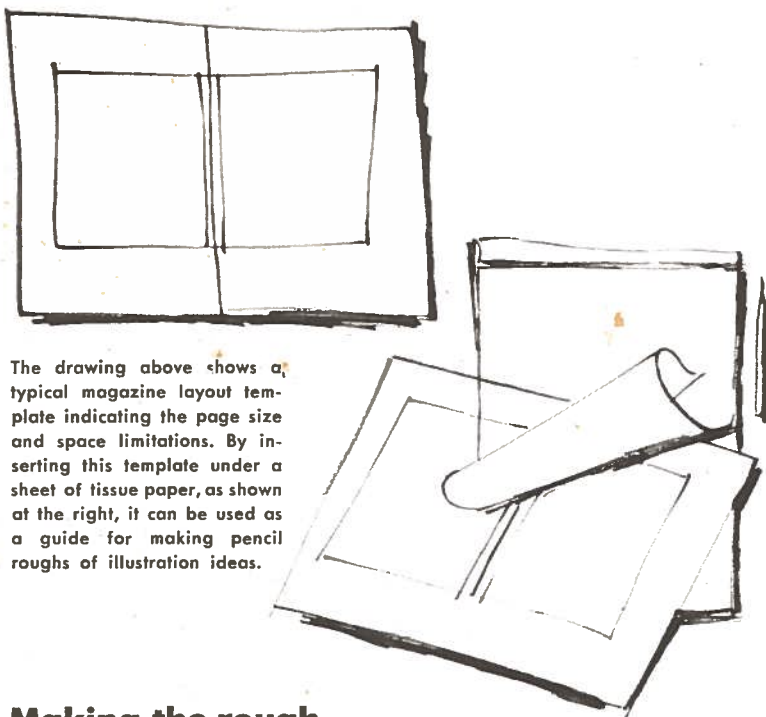
Furthermore, he must have a good insight into the problems of the *art director*. His painting, after all, will be considered not by itself as a work of art, but as it will appear in relation to the design of the magazine or page, the copy blocks associated with it, the headlines and captions which will accompany it. In addition it must be carefully planned to meet the rigid technical requirements of the process by which it will be reproduced. For after all, the illustrator is not working on a painting which will be seen as he made it. His illustration will be seen — and have value — only in its reproduced form. If his painting reproduces badly, it is a bad illustration from that important point of view, no matter what its other good qualities may be.

Unless and until the illustrator is able to hire a representative, he must also serve as his own *salesman*, *diplomat*, and *accountant*. He must be able to make contacts with art directors and convince them that he can do the job they want done. Although his paintings will do most of his selling for him, such intangible factors as personality and appearance will certainly help or hinder his cause. Inevitably problems and differences of opinion will arise. If he has some ability as a diplomat, he will be able to explain his own point of view pleasantly and convincingly. If and when he does complete an assignment, he must make sure that he is properly paid for his work, and that the government — local, state and national — receives its proper cut of the proceeds. This can be a career in itself.

And, in addition to all these other things, he must also be an *artist*!

The illustrator is called upon to play many of these roles before he even touches pencil to paper in beginning the creation of the rough for his finished picture. We will assume that up to this point he has analyzed the technical demands of his assignment, selected the scene he wishes to illustrate, located a promising setting, collected the necessary props, settled pretty definitely on the costuming, contacted his models, pictured to himself the general action that is taking place, decided on the lighting, and above all established in his own mind the feeling and mood which the picture is to have.

These essential preliminaries are now out of the way, and the illustrator puts on his apron and sits down before his drawing board. Tacked up on the walls around him, spilling off the tables, and strewn over the floor, are miscellaneous pieces of scrap, photographs, and on-the-spot sketches. He is well acquainted with all the various elements which he intends to include in his picture. His job now is to organize them into a rough drawing — pull them together in a unified picture plan that will tell the story at a single glance and make a powerful impression on the observer.



The drawing above shows a typical magazine layout template indicating the page size and space limitations. By inserting this template under a sheet of tissue paper, as shown at the right, it can be used as a guide for making pencil roughs of illustration ideas.

Making the rough

Personally I find it best to make my first rough drawing for the illustration the same size it will appear in the magazine. Some magazines supply the artist with tissue layout templates which show exactly where the gutter falls, how much bleed is necessary, etc. If I am working for a magazine which does not provide this convenience, I make my own tissue layout on the basis of pages torn from the magazine.

This approach simplifies the job, because it gives me the "feel" of the page, the relationships of blurb and title and caption to the surrounding space. I always include in my rough every element which will appear in the finished magazine pages. Although I usually don't force ideas about page layout, lettering style, caption spotting, etc., on the art director unless he requests them, by making my rough complete I have more assurance that the picture will work. Frequently I show this rough to the art director for approval, anyway, and he has the choice of accepting or rejecting my layout.

One of the biggest design problems is the gutter. Often it is desirable to run the picture across this division between the facing pages, where the magazine is bound. It is obvious that nothing of importance should be placed here, or it will be lost. On the other hand, if the important picture elements are located well away from the gutter on the two opposite pages, the picture may well tend to "break in half." The artist must arrange his material so that the composition holds together, while being careful that the gutter is as unobtrusive as possible.

A still more difficult problem arises when one page is to be reproduced in full color, with the facing page in "two colors" — black and white plus a second color. Here one must overcome not only the difficulties of the gutter, but somehow handle the material to make the reader think that the entire picture has been done in full color.

All my real problems are solved in the rough. Working with the various materials I have around me, I try to visualize the scene as though I were standing in a theatre, looking at the stage. I move to the bottom of the orchestra, and see how it

looks from that angle. Then I move back some distance toward the rear, and visualize the scene from this vantage point. Occasionally I even think of how it would appear to one of the technicians, high on a catwalk over the stage, or to a person sitting in a box off to the side.

This question of the viewpoint from which you will see the situation is extremely important in the final result. Shall the observer seem to be standing on the same level as the actors in the scene, above them, below them, or to one side? Would it be better to view the scene close-up, or from some distance? In this respect the illustrator has the advantage over the dramatist, because he can pick the *ideal* viewpoint, and give the reader the best seat in the house.

Of course an unusual viewpoint always creates added interest. It has a startling effect which is bound to attract the reader's attention. I try never to pick an unusual viewpoint, however, unless it is justified by the story itself. If one of the characters in the story is viewing the scene from the top of the stairs, for example, there is no reason why the reader should not see the scene through this character's eyes. If one of the characters is working in a manhole, it would be natural to view the scene from below. But odd viewpoints which are chosen merely to startle the reader, without any other justification, seem to me nothing more than cheap tricks which the self-respecting illustrator should avoid.

Often I draw the scene from a number of different viewpoints before I am satisfied that I have found the right one. After all, these are real "roughs" — sketches which are expected to solve the major problems of the picture without going into any detail. My interest here is in the arrangement of forms and shapes. I try to save as much of the detail as I can for the finished job so that I won't be bored when I come to the actual painting.

However, I must *know*, even at this stage, what the objects I am drawing actually look like and how they work. *Even though I am dealing with broad, basic forms, it would be a mistake to include anything that I can't draw or don't understand. If I waited until the finish to learn the appearance or the function of an object, my whole approach to it might have to be changed.* Such a change would ruin the rough, and I would have to start all over again with a new conception.



The gutter — the space between the two pages of the spread where the magazine is bound — must be kept in mind at every step in the creation of an illustration. In designing the rough sketches it is important to make sure that nothing of any consequence is lost in this dead area. During the painting of the picture, one must check constantly to see that the gutter is not breaking the whole composition into two separate halves that exist independently. Color and value patterns and relationships must be worked out to minimize the gutter break as successfully as possible, with the two halves of the picture united across the gutter into one organic design.



When working out an idea for an illustration, it is essential to keep in mind the shape of the finished painting at all times. Otherwise you are likely to develop a composition that simply won't fit the picture space. If you have become too fond of an unworkable idea you may find it hard to start over on a new approach. The sketch above was done quite spontaneously for a Post cover. A momentary pose of the group suggested the compositional pattern—a sort of hammock design with the body suspended, so to speak, between the supporting figures at left and right. I sketched the idea with great satisfaction, thinking I had the answer to the picture problem. When it came to working out the rough, however, I soon realized that this idea could not be made to conform to space requirements. It was very difficult for me to get this approach out of my head and find a design that would work. If I had kept the shape of the picture in mind from the start, I would have discarded this idea before I became too attached to it.



It is almost never wise to mislead the reader deliberately as to what the story angle really is. Art directors often forget this, and sometimes illustrators are strongly tempted to make this mistake. When I was asked to illustrate a story about boxing for *Cosmopolitan*, I debated for some time as to how I should handle the problem. Since I considered *Cosmo* a woman's magazine, I felt I more or less had to play up the love interest, although it was incidental. I planned to reserve the boxing angle for a spot. Ordinarily I am a bit touchy about how the art director receives my sketches, but in this case I was much relieved to find that he too thought the boxing illustration would be a more honest and successful approach to the problem.



In this sketch the presence of the woman is only suggested, and the boy might well be looking over his hand at the reader.



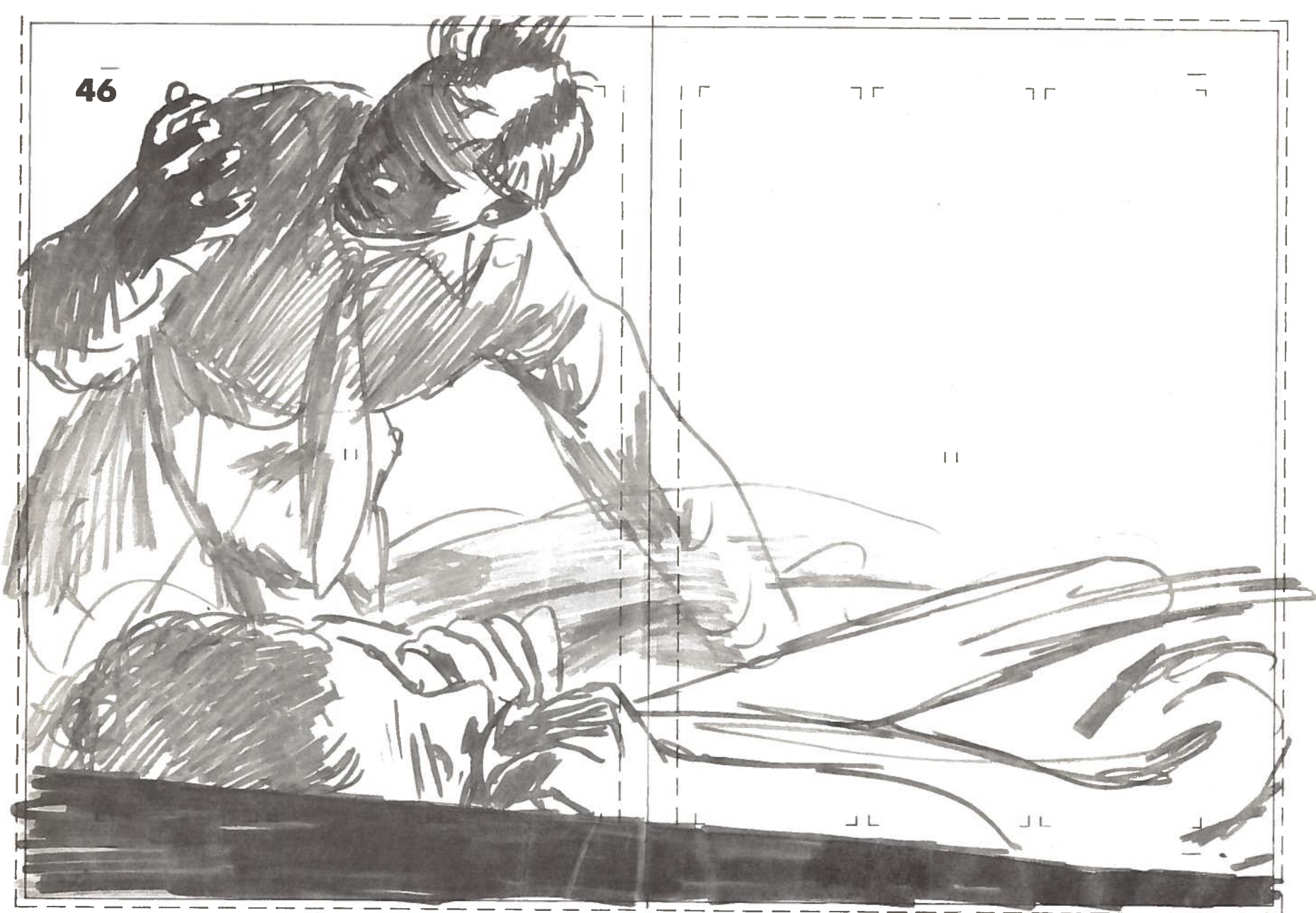
This idea is better, but it still has the same faults mentioned in Sketch 1.

Find the best solution

It's a fairly simple matter to rough out a compositional idea that will fit the established picture space and tell the story more or less well. You will often be settling for an illustration that isn't as good as it could be, however, if you accept the first idea that comes to mind. In this *Cosmopolitan* story, a boy whose arm has been paralyzed for some time becomes so angry and resentful about the moral misdeeds of his mother that he hits her. In that moment the mental bloc that caused the paralysis is removed; he can use his arm again. The problem here is to concentrate the reader's attention on two things: the boy's hand, and the cringing figure of the woman. Any one of these sketches could have been developed into an acceptable illustration, because they have all been carried far enough to solve problems of lighting, color, gesture, characterization, etc. Only the last two ideas really tell the story effectively, however, and of these only one was used to make the final illustration. It meant extra work and more brain-cudgeling to work out these different possibilities, but I was glad in the end that I had taken the time to find the *best* solution.



Now the woman has been made more prominent and her cringing attitude is suggested, but the pose of the boy's hand is still not successful. The disturbing, confused background has been eliminated.



This was the arrangement which the art director chose as the best solution. By making the boy stoop over I was able to emphasize the fact that he is gazing at his hand, and the pose permits me to make him larger on the page. The lighting also emphasizes the hand above everything else, because the features are in shadow. The fact that the woman is cowering is now obvious. It was this sketch which I developed for the printed illustration.



I sent this sketch on to the art director also, because I felt that it did the job almost as well as the idea finally chosen. Although the art director seemed to feel that the hand in this comp was handled more successfully, I chose the other sketch because here both the features and the hand would be in the light, if I used the light source indicated. That would tend to place too much emphasis on the boy's expression, not enough on his hand.



This is the finished illustration that was used for the story in *Cosmopolitan Magazine*.

The flat surface and the illusion of space

Before we can discuss the problem of making the rough in greater detail, it will be wise for us to examine some of the basic facts about painting in general.

When we sit down before the layout page, or canvas, or sketch pad, all we have before us is a completely flat surface. We have established the amount of surface that our picture is to occupy. This surface has width and height — but no depth. We could describe it in square inches, but not in cubic inches.

The flat surface on which the picture is to be drawn or painted is called the “picture plane.” We have the choice of trying to preserve the quality of the painting surface as a perfectly flat plane, or of trying to create the illusion that the various objects we represent on this surface are actually established in space *back* of the picture plane. (It is possible, of course, to paint objects so that they seem to stick out in *front* of the picture plane, extending from the surface of the painting out toward us, but the occasions when this is practical in illustration are very rare.)

We can preserve the two-dimensional flatness of the picture plane by eliminating naturalistic light and shadow, by minimizing the overlapping of objects, by avoiding mechanical perspective, by working in flat patterns, and by stressing outlines. It is harder, in some ways, to keep the picture looking completely flat than it is to establish a sense of three-dimensional space.

Space *behind* the picture plane is bound to appear the minute we represent any object that has *volume*. We naturally assume that there must be space back of the picture plane in order for this object to exist. If we place a second three-dimensional object behind the first, so that it is overlapped by the first, we have again increased the depth of space. Our eye suggests that those objects which are *nearest the bottom* of the picture are *closest* to us in space. The more objects we overlap as we go toward the *top* of the picture, the *deeper* the space back of the picture plane seems to become.

We can also suggest depth back of the picture plane by marking off the space in measured areas which are presumably of the same size. For example, a series of paving blocks arranged in order, one row back of the other, will measure off the distance back of the picture plane just as accurately and effectively as if we had painted in a ruler to show how far back the space goes.

Even the most unobservant people have noticed that as objects get further away from us, they become smaller in size. They also lose a good deal of detail, become lighter in value, and seem to be less intense in color. Furthermore, *warm* colors tend to come *forward* toward the picture plane, while *cool* colors tend to *fall back* in depth. If we follow these rules in representing objects in our picture, the objects will seem to move forward or backward in space.

To summarize: Space can be created back of the picture plane by overlapping; by measured areas; and by differences in size, texture or detail, value, and color.

It should be remembered, however, that the artist uses all

these devices at the same time in painting his picture. One may be nullified or controlled by another. Suppose, for instance, he places a blue object so that it overlaps a red object. The red still has a tendency to come forward, and the blue has a tendency to recede. But the overlapping tells us that the red object is obviously behind the blue object. Therefore we never have any doubt as to which object is farther back in space.

This possibility of controlling one device by another has many practical and subtle applications in actual painting. For example, we may have to make one of the important characters small in scale, and place him far back in the picture space. If we give him a bright orange or yellow scarf, however, the eye will notice him immediately. He will seem to belong psychologically to the foreground group, even though he is considerably removed in space.

The picture plane and the planes in space

The most obvious plane in the picture is the picture plane itself. We can think of the picture plane as though it were the pane of a window. In a two-dimensional painting, where there is no illusion of space, the painting seems to be done on the flat picture plane itself. *There is no other plane.* But in a spatial painting, where the artist attempts to create the illusion of *three* dimensions, *the picture plane is as invisible as the windowpane normally seems to be.* We look *through* the invisible picture plane to the planes behind and beyond it.

In the spatial painting there are an infinite number of other planes. The most obvious is the plane of the ground, which stretches back away from the bottom of the picture plane and moves upward behind the picture as it goes back into space. There are the various vertical planes set up by the objects which stand at right angles to the plane of the ground. There are various oblique planes which are not exactly parallel either to the vertical picture plane or the horizontal ground plane.

In designing the picture the artist must consider two kinds of arrangement: First, the patternlike arrangement that his objects make on the picture plane itself; and second, the arrangement that they make in space behind the picture plane. The artist must conceive of every spatial painting as though he were a sculptor or an architect. He must make sure that his painting looks well and works together effectively when seen from the front. But he must also keep in mind how it would look from the side, or whether it would be logical and effective if viewed from above.

Perhaps the best way to visualize this is to think of the entire scene as though it were taking place inside a plastic cube. The front view of the cube is the most important. But the artist should turn the cube around, and look at the scene inside from the side view, and look down on it from above as well.

The minute the artist begins to create the illusion of space, he must compose his objects *in space* as well as on the surface of the picture plane.

Your picture is dominated by the borders

Isolated from its background, the appearance of each form depends not only on its own character but also on the condition of the space surrounding it. When we understand this fundamental, we are on the way toward understanding how to make a picture.

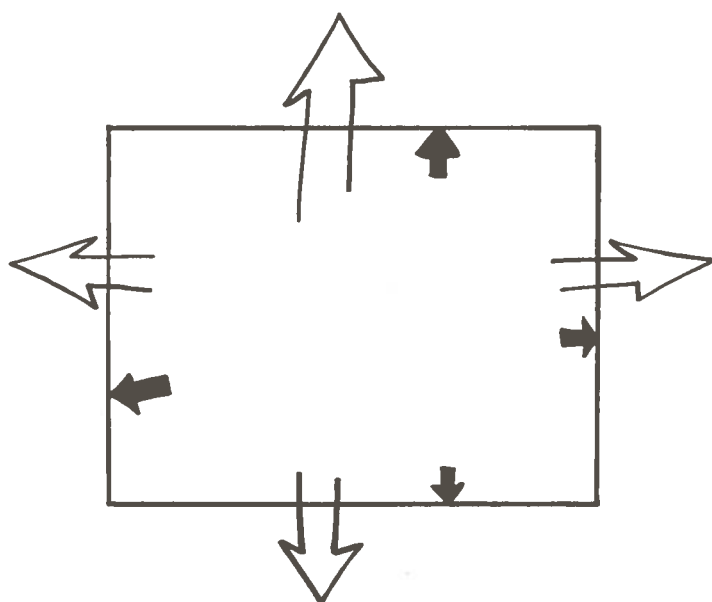
There are two visual worlds: (1) The world of unlimited space and forms which surrounds us, and (2) the limited world contained in the four sides of our picture plane.

From the unlimited forms in the world about us we select those we wish to put in our pictures. Once we have selected these forms and confined them within the picture space, we have created another world. This world must be ordered, not only because order is necessary to convey our meaning, but because the sense of order fulfills a human need.

Looking at the outer world about us, all forms are perceived in their relation to our point of view, which changes as we

glance or move about. The picture plane presents an entirely new frame of reference — its own four borders. Now every form in the picture is related to this two-dimensional plane and the lines of demarcation suggested by its borders. The borders themselves become abstractions for the four directions: up, down, right, left; and each object represented has its being and attains a sensation of movement from its spatial relationship to the four borders.

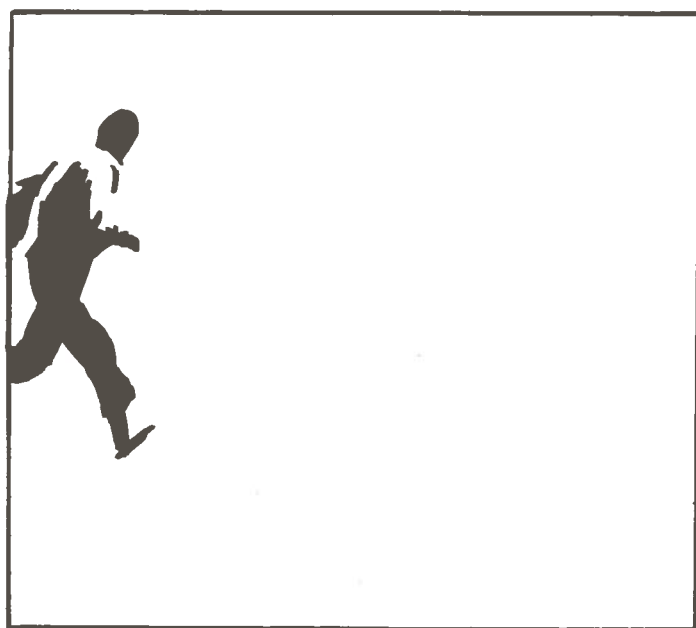
All the forms within the space appear to move right, left, up or down depending upon their placement within the picture border, and since it is an accepted fact that dark appears to recede in space, and light to come forward, the same forms move backward or forward in the picture space depending upon their value treatment. To sum up, all forms are static or have movement according to their placement and relative value in the picture space.



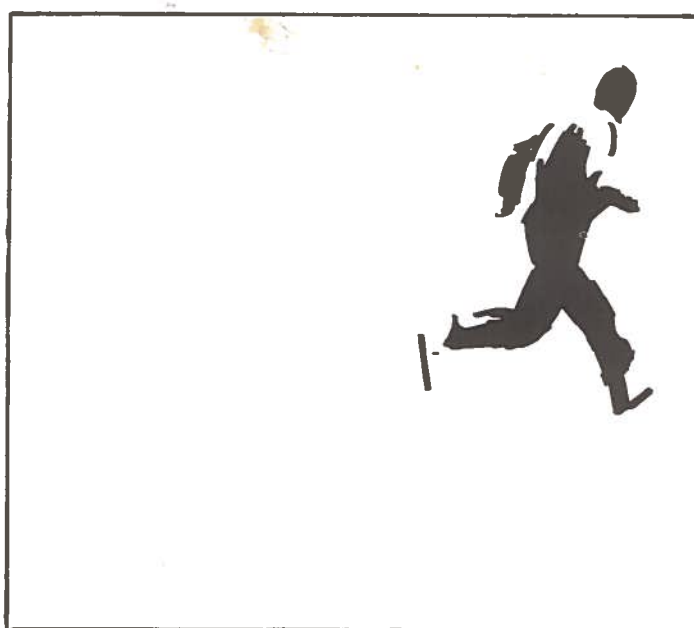
- 1 The white arrows indicate the outer world of unlimited forms and space. The black arrows point to the outside dimensions of the picture plane, which enclose and control the limited world of the picture. All the forms within the picture are related to these outer dimensions and this relationship gives them life and movement.



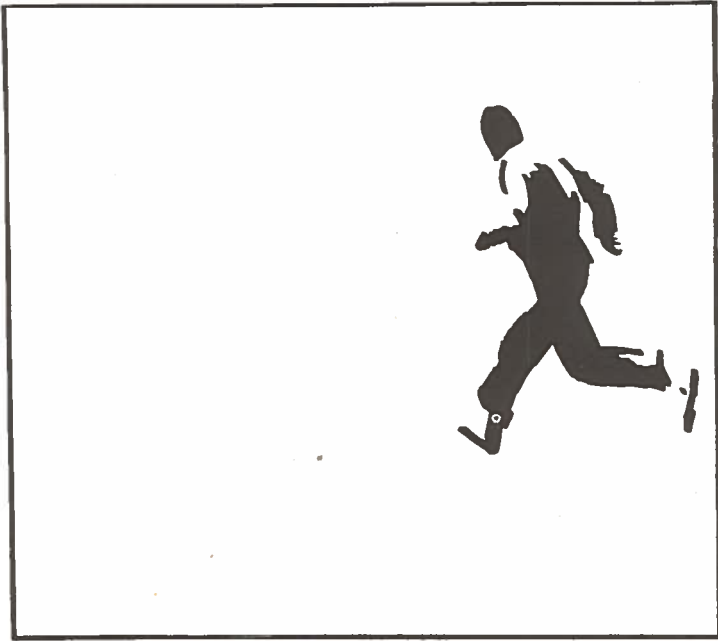
- 2 If we should see this running figure in the world about us of unlimited space and time, we would know it was moving; but related as it is to the borders of the picture, it appears frozen in space. This is because the figure is placed almost equidistant from the four borders; therefore the tension between the object and the frame is balanced and the figure looks static.



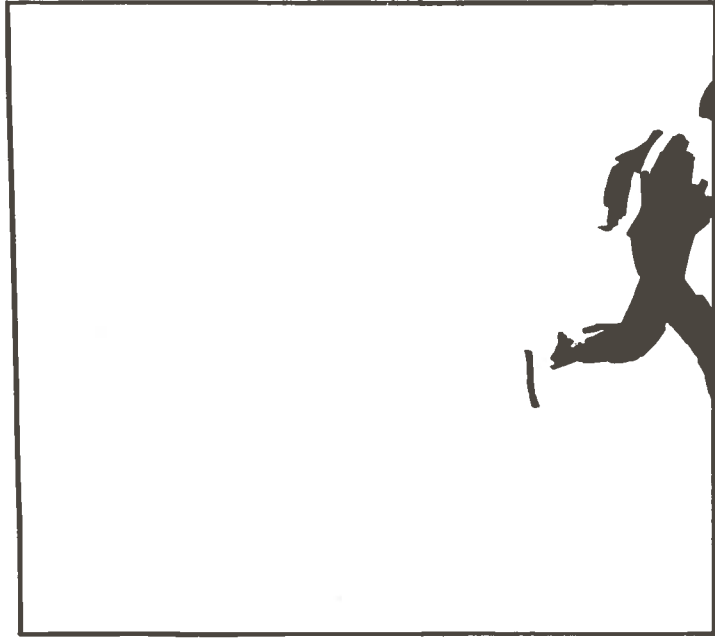
- 3 Here a new spatial relationship has been established. The running figure has space within which to run, but it remains as static as it was in the center of its space. This is because it is firmly attached to the left border of the picture, which is felt as an unmoving constant.



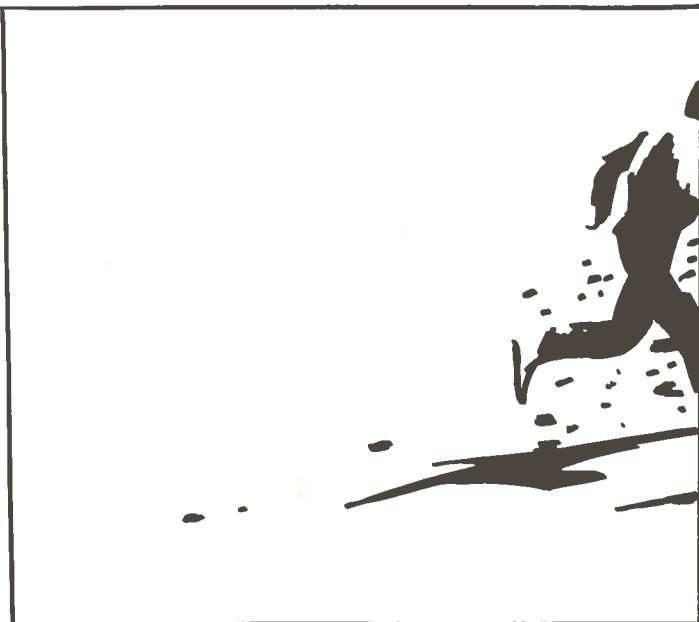
- 4 In this drawing an entirely new sensation has been introduced. The figure has been given space through which it may have run and the time element has entered in, because it would need time to cross this space. In addition, the mass of the figure is closer to the right border, thereby implying that it is moving in that direction since that border indicates a direction.



5 To prove my point, here is the running figure reversed and running to the left. Since its mass is closest to the right border, it appears to be moving backwards; moving equally as much to the right as it appeared in Figure 4.



6 Too much of a good thing is really too much. When the figure is moved so far to the right that it becomes a part of the right border, it is felt to be as static as it appeared in Figure 2 or 3.



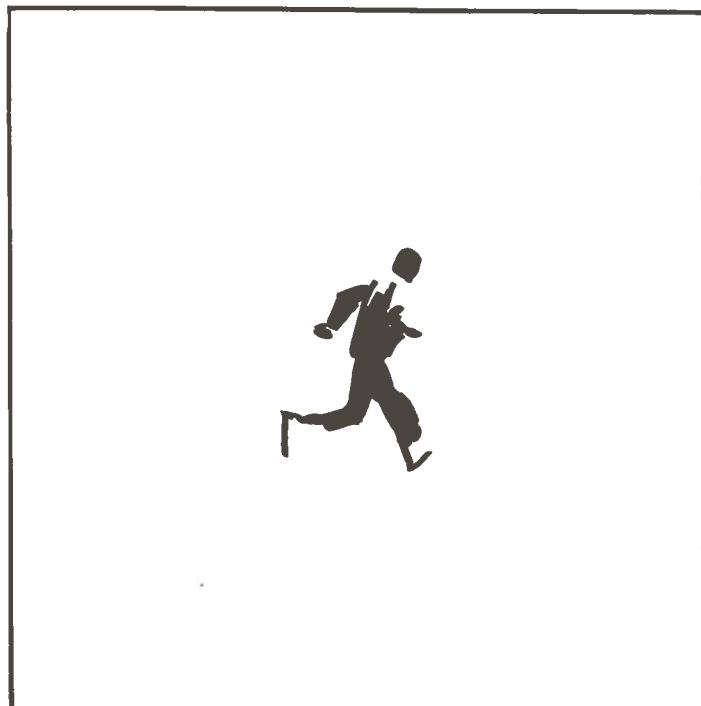
7 To illustrate a point, let's assume that we are to place a running figure within our picture space in the position shown in Figure 6. It is then necessary to manipulate the picture surface in such a way as to suggest that other forms exist outside the picture surface on the right side, thus insinuating that our space does not end at this border, but extends beyond.



8 Now at last we are on the way to composing a picture, a miniature world of its own. The birds in the sky augment the action of the figure by moving the interest forward in the same direction. The rooftop at the right, and the cast shadows in the foreground, insinuate that space exists beyond the right border. The foreground is light and comes forward; the background is dark and moves back in space. The rhythmic horizon line of the trees suggests the rhythm of the running figure.



9 If the outer dimensions of our picture represent the entire world, then it follows that the scale of those objects within that world indicates their importance or lack of importance. Note how much power and strength the figure in the small world takes to itself by domination of the space. By the same token, the same size figure in a larger world is dominated by the space surrounding it.



The basic elements of composition

The first step in making a composition is to establish the borders. Normally these are vertical and horizontal limits, although on occasion a circular, oval, or some other shape may be used. As the composition develops, it may be desirable to change the exact limits, but usually any change in the outside shape of the picture will necessitate changes in the composition itself.

The borders of the picture are its most important consideration, because every element in the picture is seen in relation to the borders. A simple line or shape has little meaning if it stands by itself in an unlimited area of space. The instant we place a border around it, however, we see the line or shape with reference to the outside lines that surround it.

A horizontal line, for example, is recognized as parallel to the horizontal borders of the picture; an upright line is seen as echoing the vertical borders. Any line or shape which is not either directly horizontal or vertical is obviously in motion, provided it is free to move.

In the natural world around us, the main horizontal gestures are those of the earth plane and the horizon. The earth plane attracts everything to itself, through the force of gravity. It requires energy — dynamic force — to overcome the pull of the earth plane. We know from common experience that when we are exhausted, we must lie down. It takes strength to rise to a kneeling position, more strength to stand, still more strength to leap into the air. When we see lines or shapes which are obviously moving away from the earth plane, we instinctively feel some of the energy ourselves.

From our earliest days we have known the pull of gravity on objects around us. Everything we pick up or attempt to move is more or less heavy, depending on its material and size. We tend to translate the objects in a painting back into natural objects, and we experience a sense of their physical weight.

When we look at a painting, we utilize all our senses — not merely the sense of sight. It is true that only our eyes move. But they transmit to us sensory information which our brains transform into a total physical experience. We “see” an object, but our bodies automatically respond to this sight by assessing its movement, the tension involved, its weight, its form, its texture and color — perhaps even its odor and sound. The information brought to us by one of our senses automatically stimulates the others. “Seeing” is a total physical reaction.

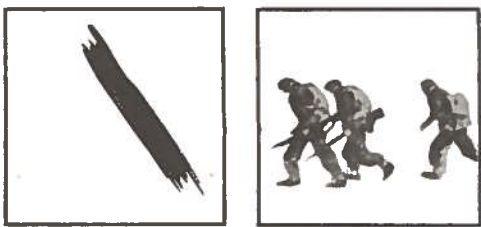
To the artist, lines and shapes and forms and textures and colors have more than simple visual significance. They stimulate also physical and mental and emotional sensations within him. Even the most simple of lines and shapes have meaning for him, especially when he sees them in relation to the picture borders. Then he feels the forces that are moving up away from the earth plane, and the forms that are falling toward it; he recognizes the various kinds of energy at work in the picture, and he adjusts and balances these forces until they express what he wants to say.



The simple horizontal line in the diagram above lies parallel to the ground line and the horizon. The line suggests utter resignation. It has no energy of any kind. Sleep, death, relaxation, peace, quiet — such ideas find natural expression in a gesture of this type. Horizontal lines are sometimes used to express movement across the earth plane, but it is obvious that there must be associated forces which have energy and create horizontal motion, because the plain horizontal line in itself has reached a state of absolute equilibrium. The prone body of the dead girl in the illustration at the right is infinitely more complex than the simple horizontal line in the diagram, yet the general arrangement of the figure follows the horizontal gesture and thereby conveys the idea of death.



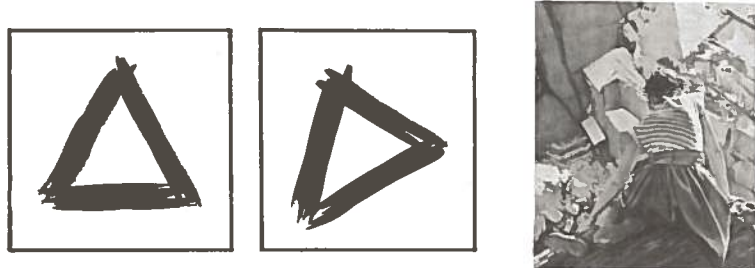
The simple vertical line in the diagram is closely associated with the vertical borders of the picture. Because it rests its weight at right angles to the ground line, it suggests stability and dignity. But it suggests the presence of energy and strength as well, because we know from experience that it takes energy to establish any balanced force in direct opposition to the laws of gravity. This vertical gesture might be found in a tree or a man standing upright. It could be expressed also in something like a tower or a spire. When an inanimate object has been raised from the ground plane so that it achieves a stability which apparently defies gravitational demands, we feel the thrusts and balances which hold it there, and unconsciously appreciate the human or natural forces which had the energy to establish this equilibrium. A strong vertical gesture conveys a sense of virility, power, mastery of the forces of life. The figure of the man in the illustration at the right seems to dominate the situation because of the strong, tall, vertical line of his body.



Now the vertical line has lost its stability. It is in motion, either toward the horizontal resting place of the ground plane, or toward the sure stability of the vertical line. It is either surrendering its energy and strength to the pull of gravity, or it is being forced away from the ground plane toward a point of vertical rest. A line in this diagonal position thus suggests motion. If it is not fixed at its lower extremity it can be pushed horizontally across the ground plane, but it must continually be propped up from beneath if it is to retain its diagonal position. The small running figures in the illustration are examples of moving diagonal lines which retain their diagonal position through the continual renewal of supporting forces.

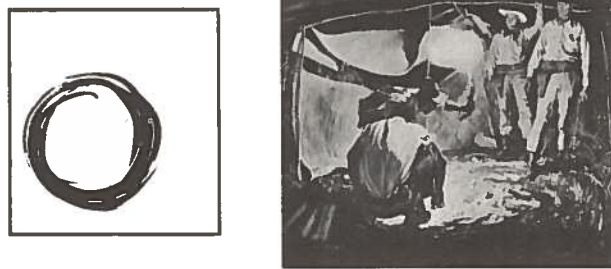


When a horizontal and a vertical gesture cross, as in the diagram above, they add strength to stability. They may also suggest conflict. I have used this motif as the basis for the composition in the illustration shown. When two diagonal gestures cross, they may be considered as propping each other up, and thereby arriving at a state of uncertain stability through the balance of opposing forces; or they may suggest again the idea of conflict — but this time a more active, positive conflict than that shown in the first diagram, because neither line has the stabilizing influence of the horizontal or vertical border.

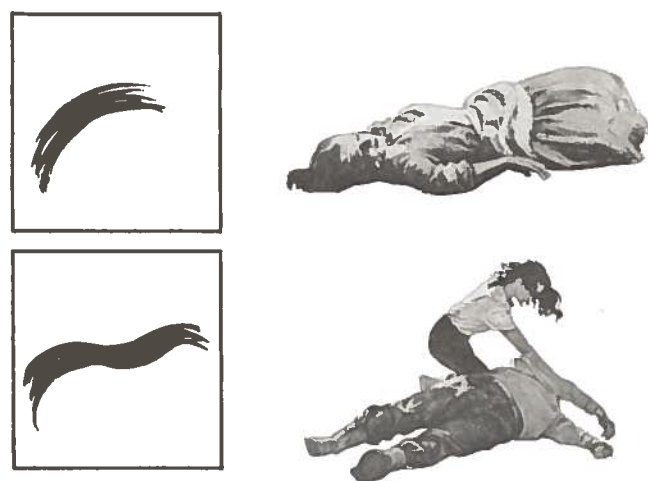


A triangle resting on its base is a combination of two diagonal lines propped together and resting on the ground plane. Especially when all the legs and angles of the triangle are equal, this suggests a very well established state of stability. All the thrusts and weights are properly and equally balanced. If the triangle is turned at an angle to the ground plane, however, so that the shape is resting on a point, the whole structure becomes unstable. All the lines seek to regain equilibrium; they all move toward the ground plane. The enclosed area adds its weight to the energy of the lines. The triangle set off balance is therefore

one of the most effective devices for creating the effect of instability in a painting. I have used this idea in the illustration shown to suggest the insecurity and fear of the little girl who accidentally finds herself stranded upon a rock ledge far up on the side of a cliff.



The circle is a mysterious symbol which has no beginning and no end. It is complete in itself, and completely self-contained. Even when other forces impinge upon it from without, it has the inner strength to sustain its isolation and solemn introversion. Because it is so independent of outside influence, it is often difficult to integrate a pure circle effectively in a compositional pattern. In the illustration shown I have used it in the figures of the squatting Australian bushmen to symbolize their strange apartness from the men of the West. Notice how self-contained they seem. Although they are friends and assistants of the bush police, they are still as mysterious and removed as though they were creatures of another planet. Notice also how the dignity and strength of the policemen have been accentuated by the strong vertical lines of their figures.



The simple curve can be considered a line in motion; the complex curve is a statement of more complicated motion. Within the rhythm of the curve many different qualities and degrees of motion and emotion can be expressed. Some curves are soft and languorous; others are taut with tension and dynamic energy. In his use of the curve the artist most frequently displays his particular sensitivity and capacity for feeling. Compare the curves which form the figure of the dead girl lying prone in the illustration above with the bowlike energy of the tense curve forming the back of the girl in the illustration below that. Just as the choreographer describes emotion in the curves or straight lines drawn by the figure moving in space, so the artist with his brush or pen finds the lines and shapes which will best convey his feeling about the objects in his painting.

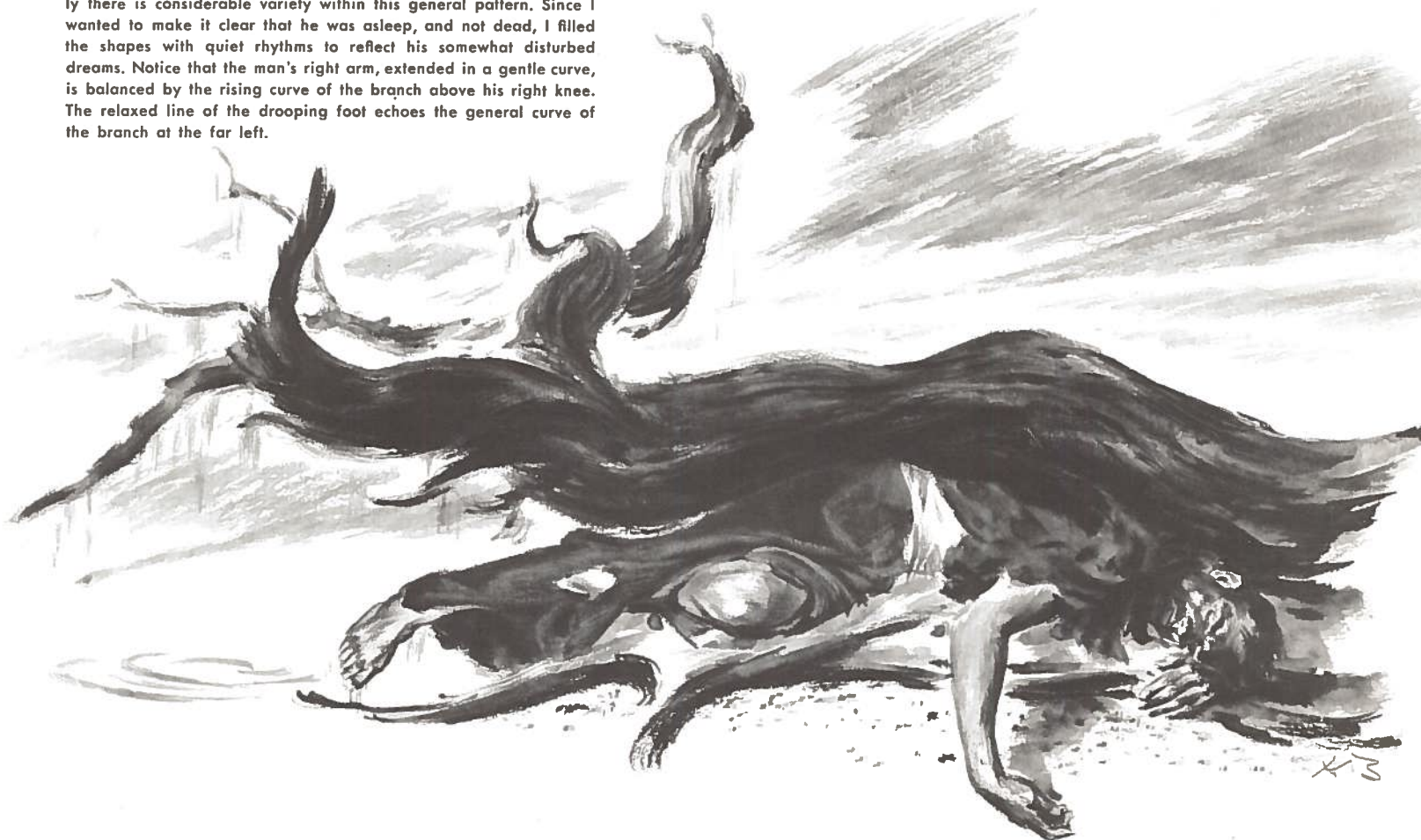
Designing the Picture

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.



These nudes reflect the dynamic strength of the vertical gesture. Because there is little variation within the simple gesture no violent action is suggested. But I used strong, dramatic contrasts of values, flowing calligraphy, and crude, heavy accents to express the amazing vitality of life I felt in this figure.

This is an example of how the horizontal gesture can be used to express repose. The prone figure of the sleeping man is followed almost caressingly by the flowing form of the tree trunk. Although the basic gesture of the composition is essentially horizontal, actually there is considerable variety within this general pattern. Since I wanted to make it clear that he was asleep, and not dead, I filled the shapes with quiet rhythms to reflect his somewhat disturbed dreams. Notice that the man's right arm, extended in a gentle curve, is balanced by the rising curve of the branch above his right knee. The relaxed line of the drooping foot echoes the general curve of the branch at the far left.



In this illustration the story action and space requirements forced me to use a horizontal composition to depict a scene of violent action. The figures were on the floor, and since I was working across the gutter of a spread I wanted to keep the drawing low in order not to use up too much space. To overcome the natural passivity of the horizontal composition, I utilized a number of devices to introduce excitement. Among the most obvious is the chair, which was a natural prop. I chose a chair with curving legs full of movement, and silhouetted the clawlike legs sharply against the white background. The figure of the man was made upright, and he therefore creates a strong vertical gesture opposed to the horizontal figure. I also designed the negative space patterns to create as much excitement as possible, and vignetted the whole scene to bring out the activity of the shapes.

Using simple themes for picture organization

Simple, basic lines and shapes provide a kind of visual alphabet which the artist combines to form more complex ideas or express more subtle concepts. Every object in the natural world is made up of simple elements related in an infinite variety of ways. No matter how complex any individual object may seem at first glance, it can be reduced to a fundamental gesture.

A man standing on both feet, a tree, a skyscraper — these are all an expression of the sturdy strength and nobility of the vertical gesture. A reclining figure, the roll of distant hills, a bunch of grapes resting on a plate — these convey a sense of peace and energy-at-rest. They express the horizontal gesture.

The aesthetic artist, who may not be much worried about reproducing the appearance of nature, can simplify and exaggerate the basic gestures of the natural object for purely expressive purposes. He can simplify or distort the motif until it bears

little relationship to the object in nature. The illustrator is usually not permitted to work with this freedom. He must stick more closely to the literal *appearance* of his subject — the complex and perhaps more confusing *outer forms* of nature.

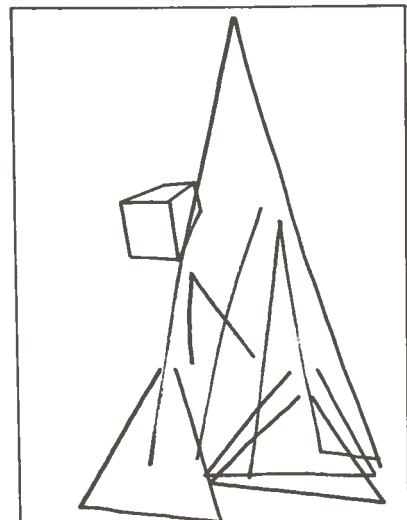
There is no reason, however, why the illustrator should not *pose* his subjects with a view to *accenting the basic gestures*. And he can *relate these gestures in a simple structural organization*, even though he wishes to reproduce his various subjects in a more or less naturalistic way.

For example, in organizing the painting of the model in a photographer's studio, I used triangles as a basis for the compositional structure. These triangles, for the most part, rest on their bases and give a certain stability and coherence to the organization. Since it would have been monotonous if this had been the only motif used, I introduced an interesting pattern of curves for purposes of contrast.

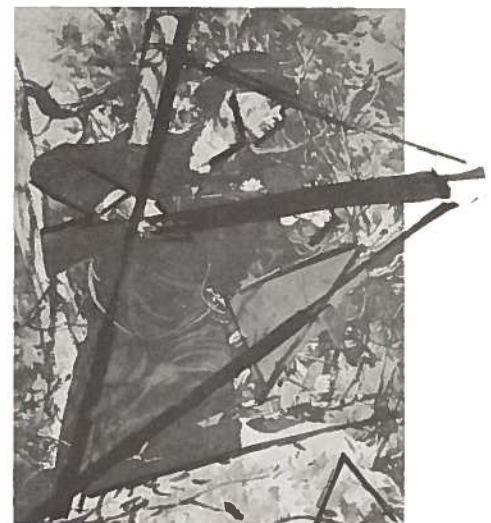
In the picture of the sniper I again used the triangle as a basic motif, but here it was set off balance. For contrast I included strongly clashing crossed lines which gave sharp, staccato-like bursts of dissonance. The two motifs together helped suggest the insecurity, the tension, and the inner conflict which possessed this apparently calm individual.

The illustration for a Maxwell House Coffee advertisement was designed around a gentle oval curve which helped tie together the various storytelling elements. There is no conflict or tension here; the scene is a friendly and happy one, and therefore the organization of the picture tells the story in a relaxed and friendly way.

You will see immediately that the painting of the man being tortured is an entirely different matter. Here the basic compositional motif is the circle. There are also three "wheels within wheels" employed in organizing the picture. These help suggest the self-contained, secret quality of the scene, and the dizziness of the hero as he undergoes this sadistic torture.



Simple basic shapes or motifs in themselves are merely the crude material with which the artist begins. Each motif is in fact capable of a wide and contrasting variety of expression, depending on how it is handled and related to other shapes. The studio picture above, for example, is at first glance merely a "picture of a girl on a ladder." More discerning analysis reveals that it is, in fact, a very carefully constructed abstraction. And it is this underlying compositional structure which gives the picture its significance. These balanced triangles arranged in space present a quiet, slightly reserved, and really quite elegant pattern.



Now study the illustration above. Again the triangle forms the basic motif, but here it becomes jagged, brutal, and cruel. The shapes are off balance; the forces are in strong opposition. Here, as in the previous example, the character of the subject is reflected in the compositional structure, and the same motif is used. But the difference in handling has resulted in an emotional impact at the opposite pole from that established in the first picture.

I made this sketch to depict a wild fight between two men, with no holds barred. Somehow the drawing seemed ineffective. Then I realized that although a certain amount of excitement is suggested by the heads which break up the top of the drawing, and by realistic presentation of the figures fighting, the basic shape of the picture as a whole and the quiet rhythms employed are altogether too tame to tell the story effectively. These shapes and rhythms obviously fail to express the violence of the fight. I discarded this scene and went further back in the story to a point just before the fight, when the psychological conflict was building up. The new incident was almost devoid of physical action, but I expressed the strong emotional conflict by designing the composition with basic shapes that were violent.

By Paul Hogan

PART TWO OF A STORY IN TWO PARTS

Heinrich Kitzel was an officer. He adopted the strident voice of one who speaks to a subordinate. He ordered the police to leave. This was outrageous impertinence. How dare the superintendent speak in that tone of voice about a lady who was a professional artist and a guest of the nation?

The superintendent, moving straight ahead, repeated his orders, which came from the King.

Marie gave a despairing cry and raised her hand to prevent further argument. "He is right," she said to Heinrich. "Please. I will go with him."

The superintendent waited as she gathered her furs and dropped her heavy veil over her face.

The Prince demanded to know where they were taking Fräulein Land. The superintendent replied that she would be escorted to her residence, where she would be held, with every comfort, under house arrest until further orders.

"They have watched me," said Marie pathetically to Heinrich.

He nodded. He was crushed and bewildered.

"I have ruined you," she said.

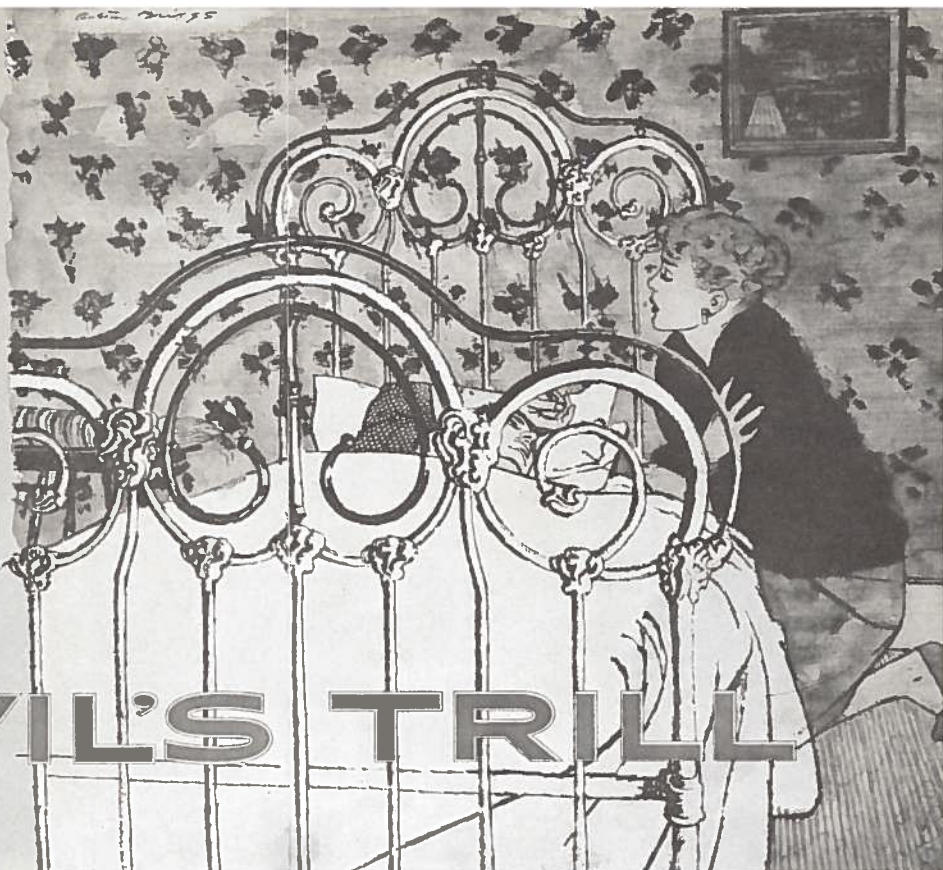
He shook his head and then stepped forward and addressed the superintendent. "You will take me also."

"No, never!" she cried, imploring him with a gesture to let her go, let what must happen, happen quickly. "Good-bye," she said to him, her eyes brimming with love and pity. With great natural dignity, which shamed both (Continued on page 247)

THE DEVIL'S TRILL

ILLUSTRATED BY AUSTIN BRIDGES

58



In contrast with the rhythmic organization of purely physical action in the baseball illustration opposite, this picture shows how rhythm can be used to express emotional ideas. The man on the bed is dying. In presenting the tension of this scene I decided to play a number of contrasting rhythms against the solid areas of white on the bedsheet and black on the girl's jacket. The rhythmic pattern of the wallpaper is rather ugly and insistent; its determined repetition makes it clear that the situation is not a trivial one. Contrasting with these heavy, repeated notes, the twisting and tortured curves of the iron bedstead surround and almost obscure the man. The uprights enclose him as though within an insurmountable fence. In contrast with the other patterns in the picture, the uncompromising rectangle of the picture frame at the upper right hangs over the woman heavily. The one unique rhythm in the whole picture is the small patch of staccato pattern on the man's pajamas. This dotted pattern reflects the man's emotion, and at the same time centers attention on his head.

Rhythm and emotion

Nature, with its seemingly endless prodigality of detail, at first glance presents a picture of utter confusion. It is only when we step back and view existence from a broad and philosophical viewpoint that we begin to appreciate the vast, coherent synthesis of rhythm underlying and controlling the whole universe.

The revolving pattern of night and day, of the recurring seasons, of the waxing and waning moon, of the swelling and ebbing tides, of birth and death — these are a few of the broader and more obvious rhythms. Even such a simple and instinctive an act as walking is essentially a rhythmic procedure. Conscious of them or not, we cannot escape the rhythms of nature, for we are indissolubly bound into the universal rhythmic pattern. Because rhythm is so basic an experience, every human being instinctively reacts to it.

In a very real sense, he reacts physically. His pulse normally moves at a regular rhythm, governed by the constant beat of his heart. Rhythms which seem to move faster than his pulse-beat tend to excite and stimulate him; slower rhythms suggest forces of greater majesty than his own being, and may either exalt or depress him. These facts are particularly obvious in the case of music, where the rhythmic beat is so direct and demanding that he begins to move his body involuntarily in response. But visual rhythms, though they may not command him as immediately, physically speaking, have an almost equally strong effect on his emotional state.

That is why a picture must be rhythmically organized and disciplined to be effective. It must establish rhythms of its own choosing in order that it may awake emotional rhythms in the personality of the beholder. The stronger and more direct the rhythmic appeal of the picture, the broader and more universal its emotional appeal will be. When discussing the choice of a picture subject, I suggested the value of working with basic emotions which are the common experience of all humanity. In the same way I recommend that one build his pictures out of rhythmic material which will find a common response.

It should not be assumed that one's pictures, therefore, must

be constructed of simple shapes repeated monotonously and verbatim throughout the composition. Man is so intimately a creature of rhythm that endless subtleties are within his grasp. Even the natives of Africa have carried audible rhythmic expression to a high level of sophistication; and similarly, their art reflects a great sensitivity to rhythmic patterns.

In its simplest form, rhythmic expression in art shows an influence toward symmetry. The Greek temples present the simple repeated upright rhythms of the columns, against which is opposed the more complicated, but still symmetrical rhythm of the pediment. This simple pattern of symmetry is carried over to more complicated neo-classic structures, where a central form is balanced on either side by exactly similar contrasting units.

Today, even in architecture, we have begun to appreciate rhythmic patterns which no longer have this four-square approach. We like our rhythms asymmetrical. A modern design for a home, for example, is much more subtle in its rhythmic pattern than a Georgian structure would be. Today our rhythms contain syncopations — accents which are "off the beat" — but the total pattern is a balanced and self-contained rhythmic expression.

Rhythmic organization of pictorial elements

Instead of working with audible rhythms arranged in time, as the musician does, the artist works with *visual rhythms arranged in space*. He expresses these rhythms, furthermore, in abstract pictorial elements. These include lines, shapes, forms, textures, values, and colors. The kind of rhythms he uses in distributing these elements throughout his picture determines, to a large extent, what the emotional content of the painting will be.

Suppose, for example, one were to express the idea of "grief" in visual rhythms. Before we could decide what kind of rhythms should be employed, we would have to know what the character

of the grieving individual is like. If he is a reserved, quiet person, a person of great dignity and deep emotional resources, the rhythmic expression would reflect those qualities in its broad, quiet sweep, with a feeling of weight and consequence. If the grieving person were a shallow soul, easily but not deeply affected, the rhythms would reflect that quality as well, in their more rapid and less significant fluctuation.

Similarly, one would express the idea of "tenderness" in lyrical, sensitive rhythms, as opposed to a strong concept of "conflict," which might call for a jagged, dynamic treatment.

In constructing his picture, the artist does not arbitrarily invent a rhythmic pattern as an abstract compositional idea. He rather *feels* the emotion of the scene, and finds in his subject those rhythmical elements which best express this feeling.

An object in nature is not restricted to a single type of emotional or rhythmic character. As we move around our subject, we find that the rhythmic pattern it presents constantly changes due to foreshortening, etc. The artist must choose that aspect of his subject when the rhythmic organization is best suited to his needs.

This observation becomes particularly important in the case of his human models. Happily enough, the human body tends to reflect emotion accurately through its physical arrangement. A person who feels grief finds that his muscles relax, and his body forms itself into physical patterns which fully express his emotion in a purely visual way. We have all come upon a person with his face buried in his hands, his whole body slumped into a picture of despondency and misery. We don't have to see this person's face to know how he feels. We instinctively ask, "What's the matter?" The whole rhythm of the individual in the pose he has instinctively adopted affects us, and we know immediately something of what he is thinking and feeling.

The art of pantomime is built upon this communication of feeling by pose and rhythm. The artist who wishes to study rhythmic expression will learn much by experimenting with this kind of physical expression. The face is so mobile a vehicle that we often distrust its message. We look twice to see if the other person is "sincere," or only pretending. We do tend to trust what the rhythmic pose of the body tells us, however, because it is less easy to control and more likely to present an honest expression of emotion. For these reasons the artist often finds it more convincing to portray emotion in large, bodily terms, than to depend entirely on facial expression to convey emotion.

The distribution of objects in the three-dimensional space back of the picture plane should also follow the rhythmic plan. The relationship of lights and darks throughout the painting should be rhythmic. So also should the planning of texture relationships, and the distribution of colors.

The element of rhythm is perhaps the most important single factor in painting, as it is in all other art. Simply because it is so fundamental, and so intimately related to emotional expression, there is no possibility of laying down laws to govern its planning and use. The creative process is primarily conducted on a level of semi-conscious activity. The artist's own emotional reaction to his subject is the surest guide in discovering and working out the subtle rhythmic relationships which will control his picture.



In this illustration for the *Saturday Evening Post* a rhythmic pattern is used to create excitement and tie the picture together. Notice how the rhythmic gesture of the pitcher's arm as he "follows through" is repeated by the legs of the catcher and the photographer in the background. The pattern not only helps the expression of the action, but since each rhythmic statement is shorter as the pattern moves back the repetition helps carry the eye back into space.



In these two pictures the same basic motif is used for the structural organization of the composition, but with quite different results. The Maxwell House Coffee illustration is built around a softly moving oval. It creates an unending movement throughout the picture which suggests the good friendship and understanding these men have. It sets up an inviting mood, a quiet feeling of "time-out," of relaxation. The torture scene next to it is designed around three quite regular, geometric circles. These circles are hard. They are moving around and around at different rates of speed, visually speaking. They create a mood of frustrated dizziness and pain. See discussion on Page 53.

In the beginning, however, it is all-important to appreciate the fact that good pictures *are* essentially *syntheses of emotion expressed in rhythm*. The great pictures of the past should be studied with an eye to the way the artist used rhythm to reflect and stimulate emotion. At the same time nature should be studied to see how expressive rhythmic patterns can be discovered and organized for the painter's use.

Repetition, variety, novelty

In any activity there are only three possibilities: repetition, variation, novelty. The painter has only these three possibilities at his disposal in handling each of the various pictorial elements.

Suppose he is planning the shapes which will make up his painting. He *could* use only one shape, repeating it over and over again. This would result in a pattern similar to the pattern in wallpaper or the over-all, coloristic designs familiar in Moslem and other Near-Eastern art forms.

A second possibility is to take the same idea and repeat it with variations each time it appears, so that the basic idea is

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easily recognizable. Each restatement of the idea, however, would contribute something new and valuable in itself. At the same time it would seem to be an exploration of the possibilities hidden in the original idea, and it would provide a valuable comment on that idea. Variation is one of the most valuable compositional devices for the artist. In any good painting you are likely to find the essential elements repeated time and again in slightly new and different forms throughout the work. The technique of variation permits the artist to be economical in the use of his basic material, while still creating interest through new approaches to that material. He can thereby achieve both economy and consistency throughout his painting.

A third possibility is to turn from material already stated or varied, and introduce an entirely new and contrasting idea. No matter how one varies a basic idea, monotony will result if the same material is used throughout the painting. A strongly contrasting idea adds strength to the others. By comparing contrasting ideas we learn new truths about all of them. It is wise to give each basic idea strong character and contrast. Then each can be varied without having the variation lose its association.

A circle and an oval are not strongly contrasting ideas. The oval seems like a variation of the circle, rather than a complete novelty. A circle and a square, a circle and a triangle, a triangle and a square, to mention a few examples, are strongly contrasting ideas. Each can be varied in endless ways without losing the essential identity of the variation.

An experienced painter selects or develops a limited number of basic ideas which he can use in his picture as compositional building blocks. He works as economically as he can, because the fewer ideas he presents, and the more often and the more strongly he presents them, the more effective his painting will be.

He practices this kind of economy not only in the variety of



This illustration is an excellent example of how repetition, variety, and novelty are used to achieve unity, interest, and eye-appeal. The four telephone booths, repeated one beside the other, are identical. But by presenting them in perspective they are given variation. Three of the figures are posed in a seated position, but essentially each is quite different from the other. So much for repetition and variation. Two touches of novelty in the picture are worth noting. First—of the four individuals, one is a girl. Second—of the four figures, one is standing. All the faces are arranged along a gentle compositional curve which ties them together. The hands, however, are positioned in a much more dynamic relationship which creates motion and leads the eye to the departing soldier's face.

shapes he uses, but also in his handling of every other element. For instance, he may restrict himself to a thin, unvarying calligraphic line, or a sensitively varied brush line; to a broken line, or a continuous, flowing line. He does not combine every possible kind of line, expressed by every possible implement, all in the same work. This rule applies similarly to his handling of values, textures, and colors.

The inexperienced painter, on the other hand, is recognized immediately by the immensity and variety of detail he intro-

duces. He employs fifty different shapes in one composition, and it is obvious that any relationship between one shape and another is purely coincidental. He works in twenty different values, and these are distributed with an obvious lack of concern for plan or purpose. He uses many colors, but they have no design pattern and no relationship except that they vaguely resemble the colors of his subject in nature. He records the unimportant details and textures with loving concern, and he is usually completely oblivious of the fact that in the process he is doing unintentional violence to the basic form.

In short, the inexperienced painter lacks discipline. He paints every picture as though he were frantically anxious to include in it everything within sight. He must somehow crowd in all the ideas that come to mind without attempting to judge their real worth, like a man packing his trunk while the house burns down around him.

The purpose of art is to put some order into nature — not to record the infinite and accidental discord of nature. The artist is much more successful when he chooses a *limited number* of well-assorted ideas, and presents these in a *coherent, interesting, and forceful* way, than he is when he presents a scene that looks like nature's attic.

Posing the model

If you accepted my discussion of "Themes" too literally, you might have assumed that I recommended *imposing* a rhythmic pattern on nature — a pattern arbitrarily conceived. That is not entirely true. Let us examine this point a little further.

In illustration we are dealing with *people* — their appearance, their actions, their problems, their emotions. We cannot force people into patterns and expect them to seem natural and unposed. The minute we try to "pose" the model consciously and deliberately, we find the person becoming stiff and artificial. A good and elementary example of this is the typical amateur snapshot. The tyro photographer, whether he is manipulating a box camera or a Rolleiflex, usually turns out much the same result. He "poses" his models. "Move a little to the left, Mabel. Now back. All right — put your arm around Bill. O.K. — smile!" Mabel and Bill show up on the print looking as though they had wire armatures instead of human bones and muscles. They are sporting a sickly grin which would recommend them for confinement in the nearest sanitarium.

The beginning illustrator who works over his models until they fit the exact poses he has developed in a sketch is likely to achieve the same results. All the life, grace, intelligence, and emotion will have somehow escaped from his models while he patiently moved a leg here, an arm there.

Fortunately, as I pointed out before, the human body tends to reflect the emotion of the person wearing it. If he really feels anger, he will show it in his pose as well as his face. If he feels depressed, his whole body will make a gesture that says "depression." But the only person who can control the model's body naturally and expressively is *the model himself*. If you can *make the model feel the emotion* you are trying to depict, half your work is done.

My procedure in posing the model is very simple. My first step is to find the person who seems to fill the role most naturally. If a high school girl is involved, I find a high school girl. If she's a girl who is up on all the latest styles, loves to dance, goes around with a gang — that's the kind of model I want. The



When you get a good comp and you're convinced that it's good, don't deviate from it even if the models want to pose in some other way. Make the poses and photos adhere to the original sketch, rather than altering the sketch to follow the photographed models. On the left is a rough sketch which I liked very much. When making the finished pencil, as shown at the right, I used tissue overlay and penciled directly over the rough. Each head and gesture was made to fit exactly where it appeared in the original rough sketch.

more closely I can cast the character, the more likely my model is to understand the situation and the problem. She will react to the situation emotionally far more accurately than I could ever direct her to react. Her appearance, her pose, her facial expression will all be real, honest, and convincing.

When I find the right model, I give her only the most general directions. First I tell her what the story is all about — who the characters are, what has happened. Then I describe the immediate scene I plan to illustrate. I try to help her imagine herself in the position of the story character. If I have made a preliminary sketch, I may suggest that she is sitting on a chair by the telephone table, for example. Her head is buried in her arm, and she's sobbing convulsively. Her ideal man, her one-and-only love all year, the captain of the football team, has just called her to say he is taking another girl to the spring dance.

If I have the right model for that role, it won't be too hard for her to *feel* the way my story character felt. From that point on, it's *her* show. It's her problem — let her act it out as though it were real. In the next few minutes, while my model is breaking her heart over a situation all too close to her own experience, I will record the poses she takes instinctively and naturally. If I'm not sure which pose or viewpoint would work out best in the composition, I may take thirty or more shots with the Rolleiflex. When these are printed, I can study them at leisure. One or more of these photos is bound to contain the kind of rhythms and shapes I feel will best express the emotion she is feeling. I may use one shot for the general pose of the body, and then take an arm or a leg or the gesture of the head from some of the other pictures.

The point is — all this material is completely natural because it is the honest expression of emotion by the person best qualified to express it, a model who is the living image of the character. I, as a mature man, could not expect to feel exactly as this fifteen-year-old girl would feel. Any attempt I might make to impose my personality on hers would probably just confuse and spoil the experience I want to record.

But on the other hand, I as an artist am the best judge of the particular pose which best reveals that emotion in pictorial

terms. My job is one of selection and synthesis. The camera, fortunately, enables me to record every aspect of a fleeting emotional expression as fast as I can move around the model. From that point on I can clarify, exaggerate, simplify, and organize the pose rhythmically until I have made it as eloquent as possible.

Let the subject solve its own problem

My usual procedure in designing a picture, then, becomes a fairly simple and understandable process.

I first find the setting which seems to me most eloquently expressive of the story background and mood. Once I have found it, I study it and organize it. Next I place my characters in this pictorial setting so that they seem completely natural and assume the relationships in terms of spacing that one would expect to find in real life.

I then call in my models, who have been chosen because they are as nearly like the story characters as possible. I explain the psychological and emotional situation, and let them express it as naturally as possible in their own terms. On the basis of my photographic records, I work out poses which can be integrated most effectively with the setting I already have. When necessary, I work the other way around, and build the background entirely around the poses of the models.

This willingness to let the setting and the models solve the picture problem as much as possible has many advantages. Chief among them is the fact that every picture is unique. If the artist depends on his own imagination to invent combinations of shapes and rhythms, he soon finds himself falling into his own



If you work from photographs, as I frequently do, and you are portraying an action scene, make sure you photograph your models *actually in action*. It's nearly impossible to predict what will happen to clothes — or to the body either, for that matter — in real action. Some artists try to pose action shots, as shown here, by propping up arms and legs on books and tables, hiking up clothing with strings, etc. The results are usually so artificial as to make it apparent to anyone that the poses were faked. Occasionally adverse circumstances of light and weather make it necessary to pose still shots of action — but these should be used only as an emergency measure, and you should have dozens of reference pictures to study, showing the body in real action similar to that faked by the model, so that you can approximate realistic action.

clichés, which are brought about by the limits of his imagination. But if he lets the subject itself, taken straight from nature, dominate his thinking and planning, his picture is bound to have a fresh and novel approach. It will be filled with seeming "accidents" — unique, authentic touches which will contribute a feeling of genuineness and conviction. The average person will be unaware that these "accidents" are very carefully integrated into the over-all pattern of the picture. Without them, however, he would sense that the picture is stilted and premeditated — a fabricated account rather than an eye-witness report.

Establishing a center of interest

It is quite possible to make an arrangement of objects in a picture so that they have a good *rhythmical* relationship and yet still create a certain confusion in the mind of the spectator. Each object seems no more important or significant than the next.

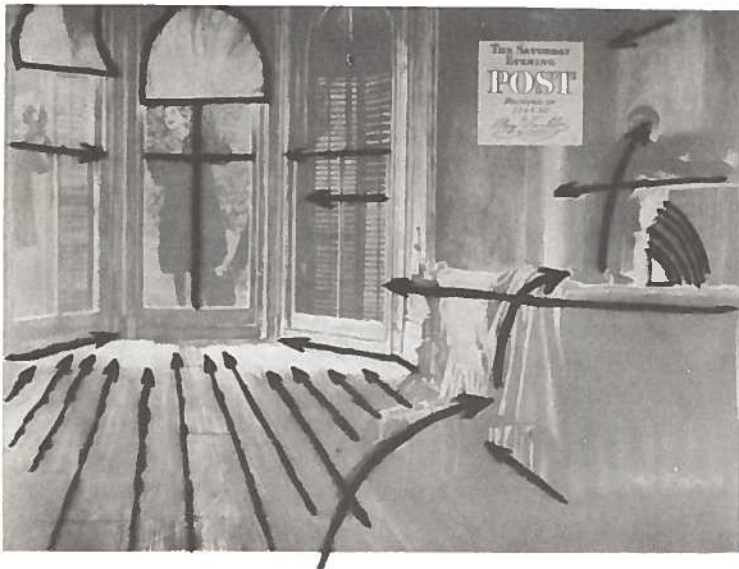
Particularly in illustrations, which must get the story across fast, it is important to establish a *strong center of interest*. If the picture is to be effective, the eye must be drawn immediately to the important actor in the scene. There must never be any question as to what is important, and what the artist wishes to stress.

This principle of illustration follows definite optical laws. When we look at a scene, we see only one part of the scene clearly. Look at the other side of the room, for example. Your eye will fall upon the most important object, the strongest accent, the most active area. It will focus on that one spot, and although you see the surrounding objects and recognize them for what they are, only a restricted area will be sharp and clear. In the same way, an illustration should *pre-focus* the eyes of the reader so that he will instinctively turn to what is most important.

Establishing a center of interest can be done in a variety of different ways. First, the shapes and gestures set up by the center of interest should create the basic rhythm of the whole picture, so that the surrounding objects seem to echo and reinforce this major statement of the rhythm. Second, the strongest contrasts of light and shade will probably be spotted in this area. Third, the most detailed treatment of textures will likely appear here. Fourth, the strongest and most interesting contrasts of color will attract the eye to this point. Fifth, the center of interest will contrast with surrounding areas in the way the edges are handled. Normally the sharpest edges will accent the center of interest, while the other edges are handled more softly depending on the importance of the objects presented.

All these devices are useful in concentrating attention, and

In this illustration the lines of the room itself, as well as the lines of the furniture, are all designed to lead the eye back to the center window where the heroine stands. She is shown to be the center of interest by the cross which is superimposed on her figure.



These three diagrams show how an eye path is used to lead the attention to the center of interest. They are analyzed more fully in Case Histories No. 9, No. 16 and No. 3.

strengthening the reader's reaction. Many beginning illustrators forget that the eye must be caught, and held, and moved, and fixed on the important material. They paint all objects with equal definition and equal emphasis. As a result the picture lacks concentration. The artist must always know in advance what he wants the observer to see first, and what reaction he wants the observer to have. Then he must marshal his technical forces to achieve that result as directly as possible.

The use of an eye-path

In order to control the observer's eye still more effectively, and to make sure that he looks immediately at the center of interest, it is often useful to construct a regular "eye-path" which will serve as a visual road down which the eye can travel.

It is perfectly possible to construct a picture which the eye has great difficulty entering. Every attempt the eye makes to penetrate such a picture results in frustration; some object is in the way, or some texture or value attracts it off to one side. Inhospitable pictures like this soon wear out the reader's patience. Since the reader is probably prepared to give the illustration no more than a glance, anyway, the artist will find it best to co-operate and help the reader see what is important as quickly as possible.

There are a number of examples on this page which show how an eye-path is designed deliberately. The artist determines in advance where he wants the reader's eye to enter the picture. He then clears a path through the relatively unimportant characters and props, leading the reader's eye directly to the center of interest. Once the reader has seen what is most important, he will study the various supplementary areas of the picture for further information.

Holding energy in equilibrium

The strength and vitality of a painting is determined by the various forces, drives, accents, and contrasts within it. In every case these vary, but they must always be held in equilibrium or the painting will burst out of its frame.

A straight horizontal line has no tension or energy. It is completely at rest. A straight vertical line has no tension, but it has weight. The fact that it is directly opposed to the horizontal, however, and fixed parallel to the vertical frame, means that it is held in place and therefore has little energy.

Bend either of these lines in an arc, and tension immediately appears. The heavier the line, and the more pronounced the arc, the greater the tension. The line becomes a bow, like a physical bow of wood, and we feel that this tension must either be released or held in equilibrium by some counter-force. The point at which the counter-force is applied to a large extent channels the direction of the original force. If we oppose the arc at one end, the line assumes a driving energy in the direction of the counter-force. If we oppose it at both ends, and place additional opposition against the center of the arc, the energy tends to burst out toward the central opposition.

When we combine arcs in a wave formation, we develop a line which moves energetically toward its end, like a driving snake. The amplitude and tension of these arcs, plus the thickness and weight of the line itself, determines the force and energy pent up within it.

Lines, in general, develop force; *shapes* tend to express themselves as weight, which is another form of energy. *Forms* are three-dimensional shapes, which combine the active force of line and the passive energy of weight. *Values* also develop energy through contrast. Light is energy — perhaps the source of energy — and it is engaged in a constant struggle against the determination of darkness to absorb it. As line and weight strive to overcome the overwhelming pull of gravity, so light fights against the enveloping power of darkness. Strong contrasts of light and darkness, like strong statements of line energy against the ground equilibrium or strong statements of weight in motion, develop maximum energy.

Even *color* relationships can be expressed in terms of energy. Color is dragged toward the darkness and the cool-warm equilibrium of the blued purples at the bottom of the color wheel. Movements toward the light yellows around the color wheel show increasing energy. Perhaps the strongest statement of contrast in color is found in a brilliant yellow set against a blued purple reduced to its darkest possible value. Any two complementaries set against each other present the same kind of struggle and direct opposition of force.

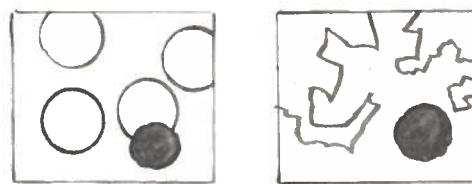
Within the painting there is a constant struggle between death and life; between the *negative* powers of gravity, darkness, and coolness, as against the *positive* energy of upward movement, light, and warmth. The stronger these contrasts are, the greater the force the painting will have.

The artist must hold opposing ideas in equilibrium. He need not necessarily balance each kind of force against a similar kind of force, however. For example, he can control the positive assertion of line energy by a suitable weight of dark value or form or color. But throughout the painting, in every sense, adjustments, balances, relationships must constantly be established and re-established to achieve equilibrium.

That is why the painting must remain in a state of flux until the last brush stroke has been applied. The changed shape of a line or form in one area will necessitate the change of a line or form or value or texture or color in another area to restore the balance of these separate statements of energy. That is why a good painting could not be altered in any respect without destroying the equilibrium of the whole.

It is the business of the artist to create the forces in his picture which will express his emotions, and at the same time discipline and control these forces so that they remain forever in a state of balance. Just as nature, by a complex system of checks and balances, maintains an equilibrium within *its* universe, so the artist must learn to control the forces he has created within *his* universe — the four borders of the painting.

There are no laws that can be laid down to assess the energy of a line, the weight of a form, the degree of tension between colors. These forces must be judged purely by the experienced sensitivity of the artist. He will most frequently make these adjustments on the basis of intuition largely subconsciously and the observer will in the same way know intuitively whether the artist has been successful.



As a simple demonstration of how the law of relativity applies to texture, study the diagrams above. In the drawing at the left, the black circle is obviously rough in relation to the smoother circles. In the diagram on the right, however, a similar black circle seems smooth in comparison with the still rougher forms which surround it. The same law applies in comparing any other qualities in a painting, whether lines, forms, values, colors, etc. All comparisons must be made between the elements which exist within the painting, rather than with somewhat similar elements in nature.

In painting, everything is relative

The world of paint is essentially an artificial world. It is a world with its own laws. While these are related to the laws of the natural world, they have been redesigned to solve the problems of a microcosm rather than a universe.

The very limitations of the painter's craft demand compromise. For example, the artist does not have at his disposal absolute light and absolute darkness, but only a very restricted range of values which can merely suggest this relationship of extremes. He cannot work with the infinite variety of color in nature — he must be content with only a few colors. He cannot present the three-dimensional forms of reality, but only the illusion of these forms.

Since he is by the limitations of his craft so far removed from nature, he frequently finds that he can express himself more effectively if he imposes still greater restrictions upon his painted world. For instance, he may be painting a light, gay, subject. To express this mood, he may decide to restrict himself to the upper range of values. His lightest light will be the lightest value he can create; his darkest dark will lie somewhere in the middle range of grays. In spite of the very restricted value range he can create the illusion of light and dark — and at the same time present the *emotional* content of the scene more effectively.

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He may, for particular reasons, apply the same kind of restrictions to other elements at his disposal. If his subject is decorative, he may limit himself to the presentation of areas instead of volumes. If technical restrictions or the subject itself so require, he may work only in black and white, or in black with one or two added colors, or within a closely restricted group of analagous colors, or in two contrasting colors, or in a simple relationship of primaries.

The important thing to observe is that the artist's ability to express himself has no relation to the technical *means* at his disposal. A picture done in a full range of colors and values and textures is not necessarily more expressive or more effective than a picture severely restricted in these respects. Quite the opposite is likely to be true.

In painting, everything is relative. A line which seems to have small energy when associated with more violent lines can appear to be a very strong line itself when it is associated with much

weaker lines. A contrast between two grays which would go almost unnoticed in a painting done in a full range of values becomes highly dramatic if the values are severely limited in range. The same observation applies to volume, or texture, or color. Within a picture, *the points of reference are the extremes* that the artist has chosen to use as controls in that particular picture — and not the ultimate contrasts that we know are possible in either paint or nature.

How does the artist decide what technical limitations he will impose upon himself in depicting a given subject? Aside from the requirements of reproduction or the policies of the magazine, he will adjust his means to the emotional character of the subject. A scene of strong emotion, violent action, basic conflicts, can often be stated most effectively in a range of technical means which will permit violent contrasts. A more sensitive mood, with less action and less conflict, will probably suggest a correspondingly more sensitive and subtle technique.

The value range of PIGMENT is *not* the value range of LIGHT

The illustrator must realize that he deals with pigment, not light. The brightest white on his palette cannot compare in intensity with the brightest light in nature; the richest black pigment never compares with the complete absence of light which we call "darkness" in nature. Therefore the pigment range of values must of necessity fall short of the actual light-and-dark scale of natural light. The limitations of the pigment range as a medium for expressing the actual range of values in nature must be compensated for by the painter. I consider the understanding of this pigment limitation and the solution to the problems it presents one of the most important discussions in the course.

Because the artist often does not accept the limitations of his palette, he is befuddled when he tries to transfer the natural light value range to his canvas. Unless he wishes to achieve a decorative rather than a realistic effect, he should *not* assume that pigment values and light values can be made equivalent and attempt to compress the whole range of natural light values within his limited pigment range. If he does do this, he will destroy the definite value relationships we perceive as "light" and "dark" in nature, and his painting will seem flat and artificial. When the artist persists in trying to achieve a realistic effect by this method, he usually puts detail into both the light and dark areas and thus destroys the natural contrast between the areas.



Notice that the emphasis is on the light end of the scale; most of the values and almost all detail is in the light area, leaving the dark area simplified.

Remember, in order to describe an object you must have light, and light itself cannot be expressed without shadow. All representational pictures may therefore be considered as expressed by light and shade. It is necessary, in a broad sense, to maintain the shadow pattern relatively undisturbed by accidental and/or incidental lights tending to destroy its basic function: *describing form*. In the same way, incidental and/or accidental darks must not be allowed to interfere seriously with the basic function of the lights: *expressing color and texture*.

Because nature has at its disposal, through light, an infinite and subtle range of values far larger than our definitely limited pigment range, we can, in nature, perceive differences of light and shadow which would be lost if expressed in terms of pigment.

When, in painting, we have made the broad statement of our light and dark patterns, there still remains a *limited* number of values in the middle range. We must employ these values carefully, if we are to avoid revealing their limited range and thus destroy our illusion of accurate representation. We must give the impression that we possess the full range of values which occurs in nature, though such is not the case. This can only be done by arbitrarily devoting the major portion of our middle values to *one* — not both — of the ends of the scale. The other end of the scale must then be expressed less subtly through the use of the very few values remaining.



The procedure is just the reverse here: the emphasis is on the dark end of the scale, thus the light area has very few values and almost no detail.



On the left is a shadow pattern. No light accent of sufficient strength to destroy this pattern may ever be used. On the right the light pattern must also be preserved. No accent dark enough to disturb its sense of unity may be used.



This illustration for the *Saturday Evening Post* is an extreme example of value simplification at one end of the scale. The dark area expresses no value change and carries no detail whatsoever.

Once the basic areas of light and dark have been simply stated, we must decide from the nature of our subject which of the middle values best express color and texture and arbitrarily change them from the way they appear in nature so that they may function as part of the light area in the picture. Your remaining values will be those which best express form, and these should be allotted to the shadow areas, or dark end of your scale. Naturally it follows from the above that the areas containing most of the value range must carry the bulk of the detail. Thus the difficult problem of where to simplify detail is automatically solved. The end of the scale which receives the fewest values must, of necessity, be the most simply handled as the means of expressing greater detail are no longer available.

Middle tones, lights, and shadows

The actual procedure followed when laying in the values of a painting has much to do with the results achieved. Many people who are inexperienced try to put in the dark shadow values first, and then paint their way toward the high lights. This is a mistake. By putting the shadows in first, and then the lighter local colors, they are imposing the local colors on the shadows—something that cannot happen in nature. In nature the local colors — the colors of the form involved — must always exist before the light can reveal them. High lights are imposed upon local colors by light; and shadow areas appear only where the

local color is deprived of light. Therefore it is only reasonable to paint in the middle tones of the object's local colors before inserting either the lights or the shadows. This procedure also avoids a practical difficulty. If the dark shadow tones are placed first, it is necessary to paint around these shadow areas carefully when adding the middle tones. On the other hand, if the middle tones are placed first, one can brush in the darker shadow tones freely right over them. The step-by-step procedure shown here demonstrates in a simplified manner my usual approach to the problem of painting any form.



1. This is a photograph of the kind from which I usually work. It is neither very good nor very bad. It has a weakness which many photos have — the values are not entirely accurate. The coat sleeve and the flesh appear to be about the same value. The eye would not see these values in quite the same way, since it is more sensitive than the film.



2. My first step is to make a pencil drawing from the photo. I rarely follow a photograph as closely as this, but for the purpose of this demonstration I am copying the print directly to make comparisons easier. In addition to pencil outlines, shadow areas have been suggested.



3. Here the middle tones of the suit and hair, which are about equal in value, have been painted in. The flesh tones were applied next to help check the middle tone of the suit.



4. With the main local color established, it is now possible to lay-in some of the shadow tones. The shadow area of the shirt may be as light as the light values of the suit, but it may not be as dark as the dark value of the flesh. The darkest dark has been used for the necktie to indicate that it is a darker value than either the suit or the flesh.



5. Now I have taken the same dark value I used for the local color of the tie, and employed it for the darkest shadow accents in the suit. These accents are in much smaller amount than the area of the tie, therefore they don't suggest that the suit is in any place as dark as the tie. White has been reserved for the highest lights in the head and a few other important accents. However, the white used for the flesh lights is not quite as white as the high light on the shirt, because the local color of the flesh is darker than the local color of the shirt.

The use of oil on gesso

Since many different technical approaches are considered in detail under the various Case Histories, there is no point in repeating that information here. I would like to make a few remarks about the use of oil paint on gesso, however, since this is my favorite medium.

Gesso panels, which are available already prepared in most art stores, consist of a glue-and-chalk coating applied to a hard surface such as Masonite. The same finish can also be applied to canvas, and when I want the more resilient quality of a cloth surface I use that.

This ground has many advantages for the commercial artist. It is a pure white (or may be tinted), and very absorbent. It soaks up the medium rapidly. One can paint over or into areas that have been worked on only a short time before without worrying about having the previous color smudge or pick up.

The chalk in the gesso has a tendency to rub off and mix with the color being applied. This gives the resulting effect considerable luminosity and a tempera-like quality. I personally prefer this to the oily, juicy effect of straight oil applied on the ordinary ground.

When colors are laid on in light washes it is possible to paint very transparently, almost as though one were using a watercolor medium. The first stages of painting often benefit from this kind of handling, because I can preserve the drawing or underpainting until I am quite sure that everything is just the way I want it. At that point I can lay on the paint more thickly and opaquely, if I wish. As mentioned before, the finished oil painting on gesso looks much like tempera; but a coating of varnish gives it an unmistakable oil quality.

My usual painting medium is pure spirits of turpentine. When I want the color to dry faster I add a few drops of a dryer called Siccatis de Courtray. My brushes are Winsor & Newton water-color brushes.

Usually I make a series of rough sketches to work out the composition. Using the final rough as a basis for the painting, I draw the picture directly on the gesso panel in oil paint with a brush. If the composition is extremely involved, I first pencil it out on tissue and trace it down on the gesso panel. When I draw directly on the gesso with brush and oil, I nearly always draw with the color I feel will be the prevailing one throughout the composition.

I have no set procedure for laying in the painting, although I normally begin painting in the surface which is deepest in space. By using a little dryer with the medium when working on these areas, I can paint the objects in front of them immediately without picking up the color underneath. I try to avoid finishing up any one section. Rather, I cover all surfaces with the colors and values I think they ought to have, working in a fairly broad manner. Sometimes, after everything is laid in, I find that it's unnecessary to carry the painting any further.

Next to good representational drawing and organization, the proper handling of values is the chief technical consideration. If the values are off in the original, the reproduction is likely to show it immediately. Colors, in a painting intended for reproduction, are in a sense a secondary consideration. This is true chiefly because accurate reproduction of color, with high speed presses and the variation of engraver's techniques and printing inks, is almost an impossibility. It can even happen that a painting done in full color will be reproduced in two colors, or in black and white. But if the values are right, the

result will be good — or at least presentable — no matter what liberties are taken with the color.

It has been my experience that subtleties of technique usually fail to come off in reproduction. The engraver's camera may miss the carefully worked out brush strokes over which the artist has labored. The same thing is true of glazes. They produce a beautiful effect in the original painting, helping the artist gain depth and an over-all consistency of tone, but heavily glazed areas are likely to lose definition in the finished reproduction. It is also difficult to work in an extremely low key and get good results on the printed page. The darkest values are likely to appear washed out.

Another important technical consideration is the question of when and how to use a "loose" handling. A diffused, apparently hesitant, or loose presentation of the subject suggests a certain contradictory attitude about where the outer limits of the form occur. A painting done entirely in hard, sharp edges seems to be frozen in time. A "loose" edge demands that the observer regard the position of that edge as "neither here nor there." That is, moving.

Students often affect a loose technique because they somehow suspect its usefulness. More often than not, however, they present their painted forms vaguely because they are uncertain of how the forms appear in nature. There is a great difference between a loose technique that is mere "faking," necessitated by ignorance, and a loose technique that is used deliberately to add life to the painting. The artist must always know what the forms are, even if he merely suggests them in order to demand active participation from the person looking at the painting.

One practical and unfortunate consideration in painting an illustration, particularly an advertising illustration, is the fact that it will be cropped to different shapes when it appears in different magazines. It is therefore necessary to carry the painting out beyond the actual dimensions of the picture, as the artist originally intended them, in order to allow for this. The ideal crop marks are then indicated beyond the borders of the painted area.

The size of the original painting in relation to the reproduction depends to a large extent on the subject matter. I often work at actual reproduction size, but when there is a considerable amount of detail involved it is more convenient to work larger — two or three times up. It is always important to remember the effect that reduction will have on a picture painted several times larger than reproduction size. When the picture is reduced all details will become sharper and clearer. If the picture is handled too precisely and tightly in the larger original, the painting will look very slick and finicky in the smaller reproduction.

Whether I am painting at reproduction size or larger, I try to do all the pictures that will be associated with each other in the same general style. For example, if I am preparing a half-page illustration, a full-page illustration, and a spot, which will be used together to illustrate the opening installment of a serial, I try to paint them all either at the same size as the reproduction size, or twice or three times larger, rather than doing one painting three times larger, one twice larger, and one reproduction size. At the same time I control the technical handling so that it looks as though these three pictures were done at one time, by the same hand, and were expected to be seen together.



1 A painter's material is, essentially, his own visual and emotional experience. He does not cease to be a painter when he leaves his drafting board or easel. Everything that happens to him is flashed deep into his being, and stored away among his collection of memory images for instant recall. The painting shown here was done purely as an exercise in value relationships. No actual models or other immediate information was used. It was based on a scene in a hotel room as I remembered it. My first step was to sketch in the general pose of the figure.



2 Now I am searching my impression of the scene, trying to recall the essential background details. These are established so that they promise to make an interesting composition. It is not essential — in fact it would probably be a mistake — to place every element exactly where it appeared in the original scene. One must choose and arrange the elements of nature with the object of making an integrated composition, rather than with the intention of recording a realistic scene.

Generally Speaking

You learn to paint — by painting

It would give me tremendous pleasure if I could tell you in a few simple words just how you can become a success as an illustrator. Unfortunately, I can't. No one can. There is no easy road, and there is no final end to the hard road. The more one is able to accomplish, the more successful one becomes, the greater and more distant the final goal appears to be.

I paint about forty-five pictures a year, and these appear in leading national magazines. Out of this group, there are usually only two or three that I really like. Seven or eight are likely to be pretty bad, and the rest are fair. I've been at this job, now, a great many years. Day after day, week after week, I go to my studio and do the best work I can. I try to approach every painting with a fresh enthusiasm, a determination to learn what that job can teach me. Over the years I have discovered what every artist must realize if he is going to continue trying to become a better artist. That lesson is that one must be eternally patient; the only way to learn to paint is — to paint!

A teacher can point out a few shortcuts that he himself worked hard to discover. A course like this may save you a lot of wasted time, and a lot of disappointments. But in the end, the most valuable lessons you will learn will be those you taught yourself. They will come out of bitter experience.

Every year thousands of beginners decide they want to become illustrators. They expend vast amounts of energy trying to find an easy way to success. They read books, they look at other people's work, they try to figure out formulas which they think will be appealing to the public. They make only a few paintings, and they are disappointed if those few attempts turn out to be something short of masterpieces. They want the rewards without the work — and life still doesn't play the game that way. When this becomes clear to them, most give up and find some easier way to make a living.

There is only one way to become an illustrator — and that way is to work from morning till night, observing, sketching, imagining, painting. It may be necessary to paint hundreds of pictures and make even more hundreds of drawings, before you can climb very far in this tough, competitive business of illustration. But if you have *talent*, if you really *want* to be a success, if you believe that you *will be* a success, and if you are willing to pay the price of success in hard work, disappointment, heart-break, and just sheer emotional and physical exhaustion, the time will undoubtedly come when you can say, "This is it. I'm in. I'm one of the boys."

And just about that time you'll begin to realize that there are still many problems that you haven't licked yet. But by then, you'll know you've got the stamina and experience to reach the next goal on the way.

Illustration should be fun

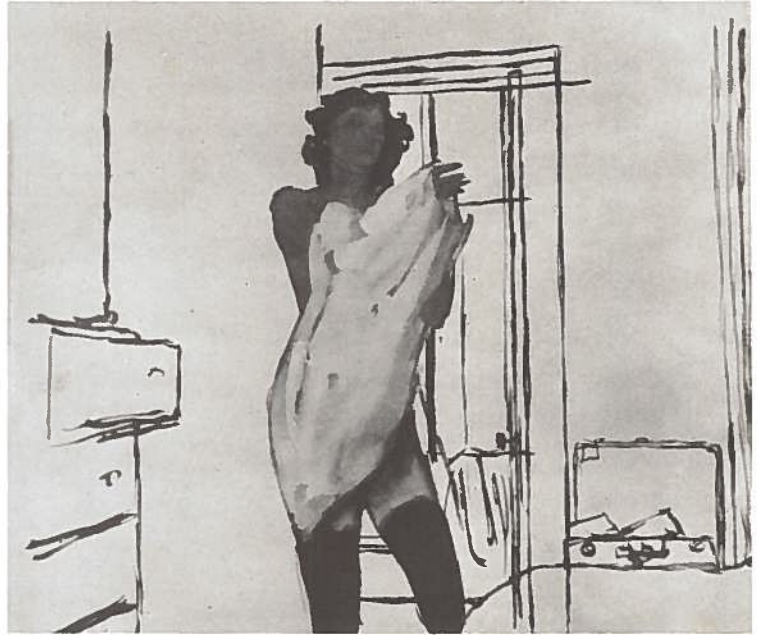
Perhaps there is one secret of success in becoming an illustrator, after all. That secret is to have fun doing it. Illustration is a full-time career. Unless you get genuine pleasure and enjoyment out of making illustrations, your chances of success and happiness are pretty small. The good illustrators I know are good because they'd rather be drawing than anything else in the world.

If you can think of any activity that would be more fun, in the long run, than being an illustrator — I'd advise you to do that. The point is, a successful illustrator has to work so much of the time at his job that there just isn't time left over to enjoy many things that aren't, somehow, connected with illustration. An illustrator has to get his biggest kicks out of his work.

Furthermore, you've got to enjoy your job because your attitude is bound to show up in your work. You can't make an illustration with a desperate, do-or-die approach, and expect it



3 Once the general framework of the picture is set, I begin to lay in the figure with semi-opaque washes. I usually start with what I know best. In this case I am most sure of the relationship between the fabric and the flesh tones. With these set down, I have a definite point of departure in establishing other colors and values.



4 Now the whole figure has been brushed in — the flesh tones and the hair, the stockings and the garment the woman is putting on. Some adjustment in values has already taken place.

to be anything but strained, artificial, and cold. A most important ingredient in a good illustration is the excitement and pleasure the artist had in making it. The picture itself will tell the observer, in some indescribable way, whether it was the happy child of pleasure, or the product of forced determination.

Not that every picture can be fun — far from it. And there are very few pictures that can be created without a few moments or a few hours of uncertainty and questioning. But in every picture, even if it is not entirely successful, there should be touches that seem to say, "This was a terrific lot of fun to do!" If there are enough of these, the painting may succeed in spite of its weaknesses.

Illustration can be fun if every picture is a new adventure. The artist must always approach his subject with a fresh viewpoint and the conviction that this subject will show him things he has never seen before. Every illustration is a new opportunity. It is one more chance to say things more clearly, to overcome old limitations, to make a masterpiece.

It's always a temptation, of course, to try and discover an easy formula that has wide public appeal and then ride it for all it's worth. Some artists have done this, and year after year they paint variations on a basic theme until it becomes hard to tell one painting from another. That kind of thing can get to be awfully boring — both for the artist and for his public.

Personally, I have tried to avoid getting tied up in a formula. I don't worry too much about whether my new picture looks very much like the one I painted two weeks ago — provided the new one is an honest expression of how I feel about the subject. Illustration is my greatest pleasure because I look upon every picture as a chance to try a new approach, and as an opportunity to make further progress in mastering technical weaknesses.

Every artist has technical limitations. Learn to face your limitations and determine to overcome them. When composing,

you must assume that you have the technical ability to express the idea — even though you know that you may not be entirely successful. If you have an idea to express, you will find the means to do it. Artists have always developed technique as a matter of necessity. They learned to draw and they mastered painting skills because they had so much desire to make their ideas clear.

Don't stifle your creative imagination by holding it back to the limits of your ability to draw or paint. Remember that what you have to say is much more important than the way you say it. No amount of technical skill will mean anything one way or the other if you haven't an idea or emotion to express in the first place. Concentrate on discovering and organizing the *idea*. As time goes on your technique will improve in direct proportion to the demands you make upon it.

This does not mean that you should ignore your weaknesses. Recognize what they are, and give them special attention. If you can't draw well, for instance, concentrate on drawing until you know you can draw anything. If your sense of value relationships is uncertain, work on values until you have that problem licked. If your sense of color needs development, experiment with color until you are sure you can do what you want with it. But never let one technical weakness limit your approach to the basic idea. If you try to escape the things that are difficult for you, you will never master them.

Half the pleasure in illustration is the reward that comes from doing the impossible. Every painting is a chance to make oneself a better artist — and to have fun doing it!

On being a person as well as an artist

If we admit that art is expression, it is obvious that unless there is someone and something to express, there is no art. Many hopeful illustrators have a thoroughly adequate technique —



5 Working with the values in the figure which have already been established, and using them as a guide, I proceed to lay in the middle values of the walls of the room and begin to suggest the cast shadows.



6 Next I place broadly the darkest darks of the door frame, the traveling bag, and the chest of drawers. You will notice that I have raised the value of the daylight seen through the doorway so that it is slightly higher in key than the woman's garment. This relationship now makes clear that one value is the light itself, and the other a garment.



7 The final step is to add the detailed drawing of the woman's head and work out various minor accents. These additions probably seem most important of all to the layman's eye. Actually they are very minor in significance as far as the exercise is concerned; once the value relationships are properly established, these refinements are relatively simple. This exercise demonstrates the logical procedure which underlies the making of a painting. One establishes certain arbitrary points of departure — in this case the values of the flesh and the garment — and then relates and balances the other values in the painting so that they make sense. There is no attempt to "copy" nature. Although the forms, shapes, and colors are derived from nature, they are designed and adjusted within the painting area as objectively as if one were creating an abstraction. No matter how realistically a painting is rendered in the end, it should always be built up in this manner, each step proceeding out of and closely related to the previous step, so that at any point in the painting's development it will make a sound, logical statement.

Generally Speaking

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.

but they have nothing to say. They lack the originality which can come only from personal experience of nature and people.

The value of an illustration lies in its first-hand testimony about things and people. This is the way the artist looked upon the world around him, and he saw it as no other individual has ever seen it. Part of his own intense surprise, excitement, and pleasure has been captured by his brush, and it gets across to other people who see the painting.

As an artist, you must evolve your own feeling for things and people, your own method of working, your own affection for certain painting materials, and your own way of handling them. Every picture you paint should draw on all your resources as a person. It should be an expression of the sum total of your experiences; it should reveal how you feel about all the things you have seen and heard and done.

The secret of becoming an artist is only partly the process of learning a technique. The more important thing is to learn to *react*. An artist is a person who *reacts* to even the smallest things that happen around him. He observes everything as exactly as possible; he absorbs it and makes it part of him; and because it is part of him he is able to re-create it in his own terms. Our bodies are nourished by the food that we eat. Our personalities are developed by all the experiences that are brought into us by our five senses. Becoming an artist is a matter of being alert, and alive to every possible sensation and experience; and then relating these different sensations and experiences in a way that makes sense.

There are some artists who are either unwilling to trust their own reactions to life, or too lazy or insensitive to become unique individuals. Such artists, since they want to make a financial success of their craft, are willing to take someone else's point of view about things and present it as their own. They become imitators of other more imaginative and more sensitive artists.

I personally cannot imagine anything more frustrating than the life of an imitator. An imitator can never do anything the originator did not do first. He can't even paint a tree, if he has not seen how the originator did it. When the vogue for the originator is over, or when the originator stops painting, the imitator is finished too. Imitation is the blindest of all blind alleys, and the most destructive habit a beginning artist can possibly get into. I know. I can speak from experience, because when I was an immature artist I imitated like mad.

Eventually I discovered that this kind of thing just doesn't pay in the end. It means that the imitator must lead a second-hand life, always seeing things through some other artist's eyes. He never gives himself a chance to do a picture that will stimulate anyone else — because he hasn't been stimulated himself. I discovered that the only way to paint is to go to life and reality for material, and to express the excitement and emotion you feel as directly as you can in your own way.

Curiously enough, the minute I began painting things the way *I* saw them I stopped worrying about the question of developing a "style." As a matter of fact, I have tried to avoid developing a special "manner." I have no set approach to a composition, no set types, no carefully formulated color scheme. I positively try to avoid mannerisms of brush stroke or technique. And yet, in spite of all this, I am told that I have a style. It is only reasonable that I should have, because the pictures I

make are made by *me*. They reveal more or less consistent choices, based on an ever-growing set of reactions and preferences. They reflect my personal taste, my own affections and dislikes. If I have a style, it is not a deliberate, conscious attempt to exploit a group of popular clichés. It is rather an unconscious projection of my personality into paint.

Style is never created out of whole cloth. Style is the natural and inevitable reflection of personality. Style is the direct expression of *what you are*. It is as intimate a matter as your manner of speech, the way you walk, the way you sign your name. Everyone inevitably has a style of his own — if he is trying honestly to express what *he* feels, without trying to imitate someone else.

Therefore, forget about the question of style. Instead, concentrate on becoming a *person*. Learn to react — to feel, to love, to want, to dislike — and style will take care of itself. Let the experiences of life make their mark upon you, and these marks will show up in your painting. Your reward will be far greater than you can now imagine, because you will have far more than a "style" — you will have become a unique personality. And that, after all, is perhaps the chief end of living.



My approach to illustration is founded on

Two basic premises

- 1** The mood or feeling of the literary idea or situation must be conveyed by the *compositional structure* of the picture, as well as by the action of the characters and their expressions.
- 2** This compositional structure, rather than being a synthetic design arbitrarily imposed upon the subject matter, should spring *naturally and inevitably* from the literary situation and its physical properties.

Once these premises are accepted, it follows that the best approach to a study of illustration must be in terms of how *specific* illustrations came into being. Therefore, the major portion of this course consists of Case Histories, which show in detail how a representative group of my paintings were made.

All the pictures considered were designed to illustrate specific literary situations. These pictures would not — perhaps *could* not — have been created without those situations to provide both inspiration *and* limitations. The accompanying structural analyses were made for the purposes of this course. Surprising as it may seem, I was often unaware of exactly what the compositional structure was until I prepared these analyses.

The fact is that when I am painting I proceed almost entirely by instinct. To a very large extent I do not realize, consciously, what is going on in the picture. When a painting is going well, I am conscious only of the fact that I am having a wonderful time. When it is going badly — and very often it is — I am miserable until I find out what's wrong. This may take minutes, hours, or even days. But by hanging on and never giving up, I finally get something close to what I want.

Somehow I refuse to find the answer intellectually, on the conscious level. I am sure that if I had cold-bloodedly attempted to put these compositions together as I have taken them apart here, they would have been failures. My approach is, first, to feel the mood of the situation I am trying to express; and, second, to find direct inspiration in the natural structure and gesture of the actual physical objects I am including in the picture.

This may sound like a somewhat clumsy and inefficient way to approach the practical problem of making pictures. If making pictures depends

on instinct, why bother with all this analysis and study? The answer is that a great deal of *conscious* work must be done before this instinctive approach can be trusted and utilized fully. Only when technique has become second nature can one proceed freely on the basis of *feeling* what the painting needs at any given point.

It would be impossible to show you how *you* should paint pictures. That is something you will work out for yourself on the basis of suggestions and ideas from many sources. What I can do, however, is show you how I approached a representative group of problems myself and utilized the exciting possibilities which these problems presented. The one thing I am most anxious to demonstrate for you is the fact that *the solution to every picture problem must grow naturally and inevitably from the problem itself.*

Because of this fact, no two pictures can or should be even remotely alike. And this, perhaps, is why I find illustration so much fun. Painting a picture, for me, is like watching the picture grow. The subject matter suggests an idea, and in working out this idea other ideas develop. I weigh and assess them all. Some I discard, others I pick up and develop. The picture idea grows organically, like something alive.

I am told that my work has a style of its own. If that is true, it certainly does not result from any conscious attempt on my part to impose a style upon it. In fact, I make a deliberate effort to avoid any mannerism or personal cliché. If my work has style, that style results from my basic approach as stated in the premises listed above. To master my subject matter, I become its servant. But although I take advantage of every happy accident along the way, there is considerable art involved in making happy accidents happen. How this can be done is one of the questions we will consider in the pages which follow.

Case History No. 1 — Crisis In The House

A typical illustration from assignment to printed page

EDITORIAL ROOMS

THE SATURDAY
EVENING
POST
FOUNDED BY
Benjamin Franklin

THE CURTIS
PUBLISHING COMPANY
PHILADELPHIA 5
November 4, 1948

FRANK KILKER
ASSOCIATE ART EDITOR

Dear Austin:

I know you have been pining away for lack of assignments from the Post so I am forwarding the enclosed story, CHILDREN JUST LOVE COCKTAILS, for you to illustrate.

This is by one of our eminent Associate Editors, a fellow you probably are acquainted with as he used to handle Inside Information. For that reason, and because he is one of us here, I thought you would like to give it the works. You will notice that I have marked a situation for the major illustration but this is offered only as a suggestion.

Give me a ring after reading the story as I have further ideas I'd like to discuss with you, but which should not effect the illustration.

All the best,
Frank
Frank Kilker

Mr. Austin Briggs
FK:ecm

1 The editor suggested a family group scene. I followed his suggestion because the scene aimed the story toward its best public.

POST-B&W *****V 12
STORY
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Children Just Love Cocktails
By Ralph Knight

JONAS WEED, a lower-middled-aged but fastigued Philadelphia businessman, could not admit his vice to himself, for then he would be an alcoholic. By the fact was that the only dependable bright spot in each twenty-four hours was the period he spent after he got home from the office, drinking one or four cocktails until Margaret called him for this-is-the-last time to the dinner table. Then, through the rose-colored bottom of a glass, he could see that his wife was a gem, his children were diamonds in the rough, God was in His heaven, and maybe, after all, the dry cleaner hadn't shrunk his pants so that they pinched him at the pod, but he had got fat—and what difference did it make to the charity of his mental processes anyway?

One evening the Maine Line local train hunched its cars together like an inchworm and skidded to a halt at Merion station. Shifting a cinder from one part of his left eye to another part, Jonas picked up his raincoat and disembarked into the brutal July sunshine. As he flapped his feet up the Beacom Lane hill, a rill of perspiration hastened down one of his flanks and disappeared into his pants leg at the shank. Jonas thought, *Considering everything that has gone wrong at the office, at home, in Congress, Europe and in the islands beyond the sea, and in my interesting girls' legs, can this be only Wednesday?*

Margaret met him at the front door in a fresh, pretty dress that, having just emerged from the kitchen, looked like a wet rag. Jonas mumbled, "H'la, dear." They loved each other and both wanted to kiss hard a couple of times before the children came ogling around and made them shift gears into kissing like fathers and mothers. But neither could summon the zing.

Margaret asked ritualistically, "Want a Martini to freshen you up, bub?"

For fifteen years, Jonas had planned to answer, "Oh, let it go tonight; the kids are hungry," but he had never said it, for fear that Margaret would feed the hungry kids.

He said, "Oh, one or two maybe, if we've got time." He knew she knew that the kids would now starve for an hour, as usual.

Indeed, maybe this would be one of those rare nights when, after forty-five minutes, Margaret would mix an extra batch of Martinis and have one or two herself, and the kids would starve for two hours. Although it embarrassed Jonas when company came in, he always let Margaret mix the drink. His philosophy was that it is ridiculous and phony for a man to pose as able to do anything better in the kitchen than a woman, and it is a damn sight easier just to sit in the living room and wait.

Jonas went upstairs, sloshed his face in cold water into which he had embarrassedly shot a few drops of his wife's perfume, put on a pair of moccasins that were fourteen years old, and went to the window and bowed gravely to the juniper bush in the back-yard shrubbery, which he vaguely understood was distantly related to the manufacture of gin. Then he descended to the living room, where, meanwhile, all the family had impatiently gathered, and sat down on the middle of his spine in the one horrible-looking chair in the room, a fossil he refused to have burned up because to him it was home, sweet home. His arrival was the signal for all hell to break loose.

As Margaret deposited the cocktail shaker beside him, she said tiredly, "The reason I didn't meet you at the station with the car is that it began to explode under the hood this afternoon, and Mr. Smithers at the garage says it can't be run until he takes the H&F off the motor and sees what is sloshing around, and I just had to invite the Dolsons over for a high-ball this evening, whether you have got to work or not, because you have been saying for six months it had to be done and somebody had to do something. If it gets one degree hotter, I am going to take a knife and —"

"Dad," exploded Betty, the eighteen-year-old young lady of the family, who sat on the sofa with her glue-jeaned legs folded against her shoulders, "am I a member of this family?"

"Well, now," Jonas considered that warily.

Over in the corner chair, Peter, who was twenty-one, was sitting on his shoulder blades. "Dad," he and every time I go up to my room I find out about another book or bookcase or shirt or something that this child has liberated into her room while I was

2 My first step in making the illustration was to look for a suitable background against which to stage the action. I have two sets of files — the usual scrap file containing magazine clippings, etc., and a second file containing my personal photos of things, people, and places. These photos were taken at random wherever I went over the years; I snapped whatever interested me and might some day be of use as material for an illustration. While going through these files, I decided that my own family and living room would be perfect for this illustration.



3 I went to the living room, looked at it from various angles, and chose a view from the top of my radio cabinet as the best in order to show the family circle I wanted to portray. The unusual viewpoint was thus not chosen arbitrarily — this was actually the only way to get across the family circle idea.

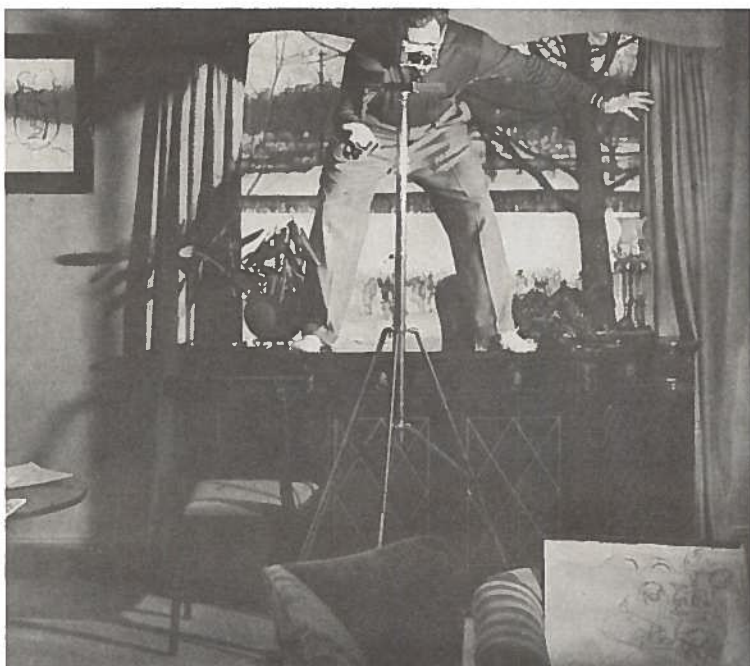




- 4 Here is the rough I drew as I stood on the radio cabinet. I pretended that I was viewing the room from the other side. You will notice that the radio cabinet, on which I was standing, is sketched in at the right in the background.

- 5 By this time I had become concerned about one aspect of the situation I had not considered in the beginning. That was the amount of drinking in the scene. The Post does not accept any liquor advertising, but the magazine does permit moderate drinking to be shown in illustrations. Most other publications are not so sensitive on this point. I called the Post art director in Philadelphia and described what I intended to do. He approved of my approach, but asked me to limit the drinking as much as possible. In the end, I decided to show only one glass—that in the father's hand.





6 It occurred to me that since my own living room seemed the right background for the action, the members of my own family might be suitable models. They did fit the characters in the story reasonably closely. I therefore posed them and began making numerous photographs. Here I am using a Contax. Of the three cameras I possess — Contax, Rolleiflex, and Speed Graphic — this one causes the least distortion. In photographing a room this size I wanted to hold distortion to a minimum.



7 Here is the room as seen from my vantage point atop the radio cabinet. The Contax is mounted on my Speed Graphic easel.

8 Rather than light the scene from an arbitrary and artificial point, I installed powerful Photoflood bulbs in place of the usual lamps in the table lights. The only additional light was a 500-watt Photoflood reflected off the ceiling for general illumination. In this scene my charming daughter Lorna is making the usual mistake of amateur models — her gestures are far more dramatic than they would be in real life.





9 When working with amateurs, the usual problem is not getting them to "project" — but rather toning down their enthusiasm. I always try to underplay the action. This is characteristic of my painting, and I suppose I take my cue for this approach from the stage acting of the present day.



10 Now I've gotten into the act myself. My daughter is performing with more restraint, but she is misplaced compositionally. Since I was one of the actors, I failed to realize this immediately. Directing and posing at the same time just doesn't work. If I had been in my original position on the radio cabinet, I would have caught this mistake much sooner. You may be wondering who's clicking the shutter; it's our colored maid, Fanny.

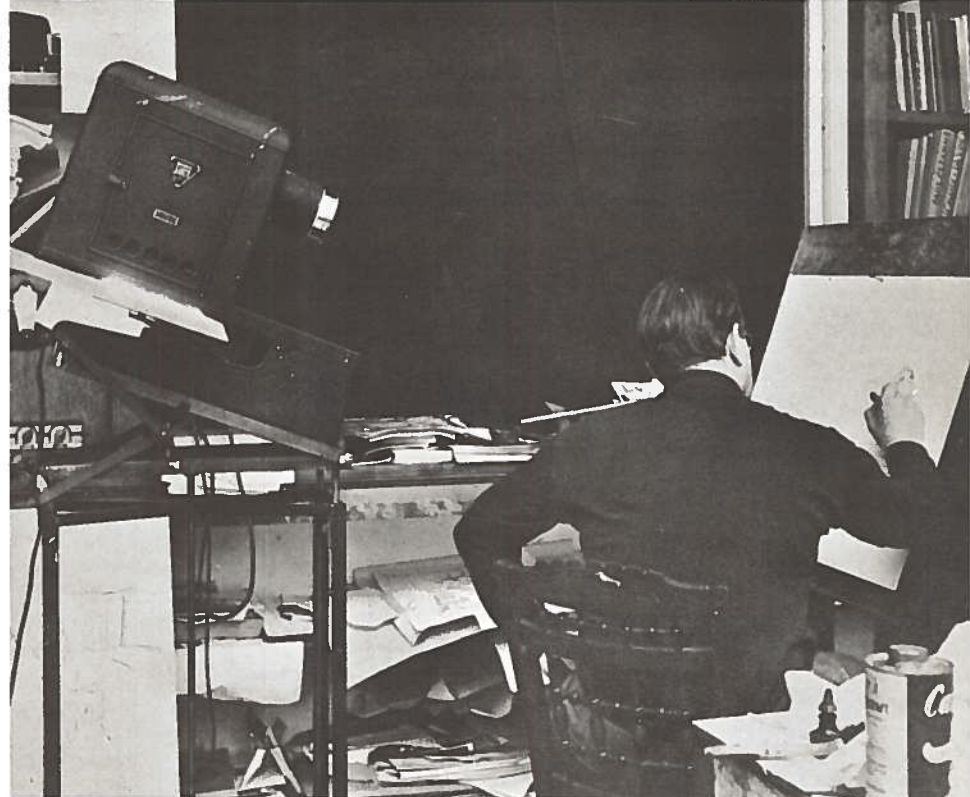


11 When I realized that Lorna's position in the composition was wrong, I stopped photographing and made this sketch to work out the placement and action of the figures more exactly. It was possible to make such a rigid sketch, however, only because I had been thoroughly acquainted with the problem through my previous photographing.





12 Once the compositional problem was settled, I made many more photographs. I then sat down to study the prints and decide what would be most useful. For an artist who works from photographs frequently, this is a highly critical point in the making of an illustration. There are a number of questions which must be asked of these photographs: Which poses best tell the story? Which shapes are most interesting? What light-and-shade patterns help the composition most? Which combinations suggest the most interesting color treatment?



13 I now took the photograph which best showed the interior of the room and projected it onto a sheet of layout paper. After finding the vanishing points, I corrected the distortion of the camera.



14 I have never yet seen a photograph, no matter how carefully posed, which could not be improved. I never use the photo literally. As the example at the left demonstrates, the photograph serves essentially as reference material. Each figure and object is reworked in sketches, and changes and corrections are made until it is as clear, emphatic, and organized as possible.



15 The final illustration was done in tempera on gesso. The underdrawing was layed-in with India ink. I proceeded to paint in the background first. It is good practice to cover the painting surface as rapidly as possible, since it is difficult to judge values in relation to the uncovered white surface.



16 Now all the white surface has been painted over. Although the photograph does not show it, the flesh areas have received a color wash of middle value.



17 Having established basic color and value relationships, I have begun to finish up the picture by working out detail in areas which, up to this point, have merely been broadly indicated.



18 This is the finish. As a painting, it is not a favorite of mine. As an illustration, however, designed to attract readers to this particular story, it turned out to be quite successful.



Crisis in the House

By RALPH KNIGHT

What answer can a parent give to this: "Why can't I do what you do? If you take a drink, why can't I?"

JIMMY WREED, a lower-middle-aged, but fatigued Philadelphia businessman, could not admit his wife to himself, for then he would be an alcoholic. But the fact was that the only dependable bright spot in such twenty-four hours was the period he spent after he got home from the office, drinking one or four cocktails until Margaret called him for this or that time to the dinner table. Then, through the rose-colored haze of a glass, he could see that his wife was a gem, his children were diamonds in the rough, and was in his hands, and maybe, after all, the day's dinner hadn't shrunk his points so that they pinched him at the end, but he had got fat — and what difference did it make to the clarity of his mental processes anyway?

One evening the Main Line hotel crisis loomed its men together like an inchworm and skidded to a halt at Merion station. Shifting a circle from one part of his left eye to another part, James picked up his valise and disappeared into the hotel July sunshine. As he stepped his foot up the Hammock Lane hill, thinking how much steeper it was going to be when presently the family moved to another house which had been engaged on Rockland Avenue hill, a rift of perspiration leaked down one of his cheeks and disappeared into his pants leg of the shock. James thought, considering everything that has gone wrong in the office, at home, in Congress, Europe and the schools beyond the sea, and if my interest in girls' legs, one this so only Wednesday.

Margaret met him at the front door in a fresh, pretty dress that, having just emerged from the bath, looked like a wet rag. James mumbled, "It's, dear." They looked each other and both noticed to him hard a couple of times before the children came giggling around and made them still gawky into kissing the fathers and mothers. But neither could remember the ring.

Margaret asked rhetorically, "Want a Martini to freshen you up, huh?"

For fifteen years, James had planned to answer, "Oh, let it go tonight; the kids are hungry," but he had never said it, for fear that Margaret would lose the hungry kids.

He said, "Oh, one or two maybe, if you've got time." He knew also knew that the kids would now starve for an hour or so.

Indeed, maybe this would be one of those rare nights when, after forty-five minutes, Margaret would wait an extra batch of Martini and have one or two herself, and the kids would starve for two hours. Although it embarrassed James when company came in, he always let Margaret run the drink. His philosophy was that it is ridiculous and plenty for a man to pass on child to do anything better in the kitchen than a woman, and it is a damn sight easier just to sit in the living room and wait.

James went upstairs, washed his face in cold water into which he had unconsciously shot a few drops of his wife's perfume, put on a pair of slippers that were fourteen years old, and went to the window and looked gravely in the jungle bush on the back-yard shrubbery, which he vaguely understood was distantly related to the manufacture of gin. Then he descended to the living room, where, meanwhile, all the family had mysteriously gathered, and sat down on the middle of his spine in the new horrible-looking chair in the room, a chair that he refused to have turned up because in his it was home, sweet home. His arrival was the signal for all hell to break loose.

As Margaret deposited the cocktail shaker beside him, she said lightly, "The reason I didn't meet you at the station with the air is that it began to explode under the hard this afternoon, and Mr. Simkins at the garage says it can't be run until he takes the lid off the motor and sees what is bubbling around, and I just had to invite the Daltons over for a highlight this evening, whether you have got to work or not, because you have been saying for six months it had to be done and somebody had to do something. If it gets any deeper better, I am going to take a bath and —"

"Dad," exploded Betty, the sixteen-year-old young lady of the family, who sat on the sofa with her blue-jeaned legs folded against her shoulders, "am I a member of this family?"

"Well, sure," James concluded that worthy over in the corner chair. Peter, who was twenty-one, was sitting on his shoulder blades.

"Dad," he thundered, "opening his knees as he could see his father. "I come home from a tough year at college and every time I go up to my room I find out about another bunk or bunkhouse to shoot or something that this child has liberated into her room while I was gone, and damn it to hell, I want to know —"

"Why don't you clean up your G.I. language?" Betty snapped at him. (Continued on Page 121)

ILLUSTRATED BY AUSTIN BRIGGS

19 This is the way the illustration looked in the Post.

20 It is deeply gratifying to the illustrator when the author of the story likes a painting well enough to sit down and type out a note of thanks. Magazine illustration is a co-operative undertaking, and it makes one feel good to know that he caught the spirit of the story well enough to please his best-informed critic —the author.

EDITORIAL ROOMS

THE SATURDAY
EVENING
POST
FOUNDED BY
Ben Hibbs

BEN HIBBS
EDITOR

THE CURTIS
PUBLISHING COMPANY
PHILADELPHIA 5

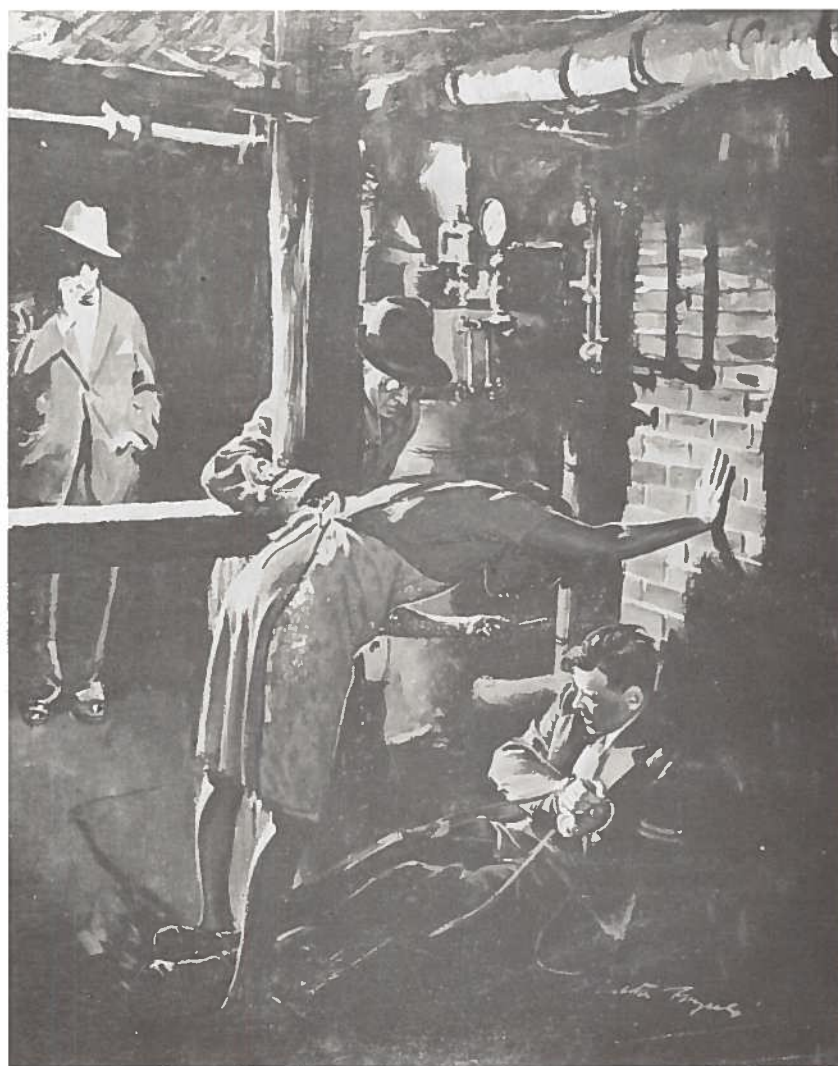
January 3, 1949

Dear Mr. Briggs:

Frank Kilker just dropped in my office with your illustration for my cocktail story, and I hasten to take typewriter in hand to thank you for doing such a thoughtful and completely pleasing job. Everybody around here is happy about the picture, and I'm the happiest of all.

I do hope that we can get together some time.

Sincerely,
Ralph Knight



By permission Saturday Evening Post © 1945 Curtis Pub. Co.

This is the illustration as it appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post*. The reproduction size was approximately 6½ x 7½ inches. The original painting, which measured 15 x 18 inches, was done in casein tempera on a Masonite panel with a gesso ground. It was a two color job—black and white, with yellow ochre mixed into the painting throughout.



This is my conception of a cliché approach to this problem. I've seen this done dozens of times—and so has the reader. It would be dramatic, but in a hammy sort of way. It would also solve the problem for the illustrator, if he were willing to accept such a cheap and easy answer. Personally I could never convince myself that this would be a worthwhile picture to make, because it offers so little opportunity for the kind of dramatic structural composition employed in my own version of the scene.

Case History No. 2 — The Unsuspected

Creating a mood of sadistic torture

This is an illustration for a *Saturday Evening Post* serial called "The Unsuspected." It is an excellent example of how every element in the picture develops out of the story situation and is used to carry a particular mood to as effective a realization as possible.

When I read this installment, one scene struck me as climactic and exciting. The hero was roped up and being held prisoner in a basement. Three individuals were torturing him in an attempt to extort some information they needed badly. These were practically all the facts I had to work with, except for a more or less detailed description of the characters. The exact appearance of the setting, the number of props and their nature, the position of the hero, and the precise action — these were up to me, the artist, to supply.

An illustration should begin where the author leaves off. It must amplify what the general literary content suggests, and make the situation convincing visually. More than that, the illustration must make it appear that this is a unique situation — one that has never before occurred in quite this way. Therefore the setting must be appropriate — and individual. The characters must be believable — personalities in their own right. The whole composition, lighting, and handling must contribute to establishing the force of the mood and the reality of the problem *in an original way*.

Clichés can never establish this satisfactorily. The reader looks at a time-worn illustration and says to himself, "This story must be like the one I read two months ago." Because clichés *are* clichés they come to mind easily. If an illustrator settles for an idea which has been done to death, his work will lack individuality and freshness. It will not catch the eye of the reader or sell the story.

Beginning with reality

The best way to discover a new approach to an illustration problem is to begin with a real setting or personality. The minute I read this scene a specific basement in a friend's home flashed through my mind. From what I could remember of it, I felt that some aspect of this basement would provide an ideal setting. I immediately went over and made some sketches.

There were many views of the basement which would not have suggested a horrifying locale. Finally, however, I found myself in a particular spot which seemed designed for my purposes. At the time I was not quite sure *why* it was what I wanted — but I felt instinctively that this was just what I needed for the picture. My sketch seemed to contain precisely the sinister atmosphere which I felt should dominate the illustration.

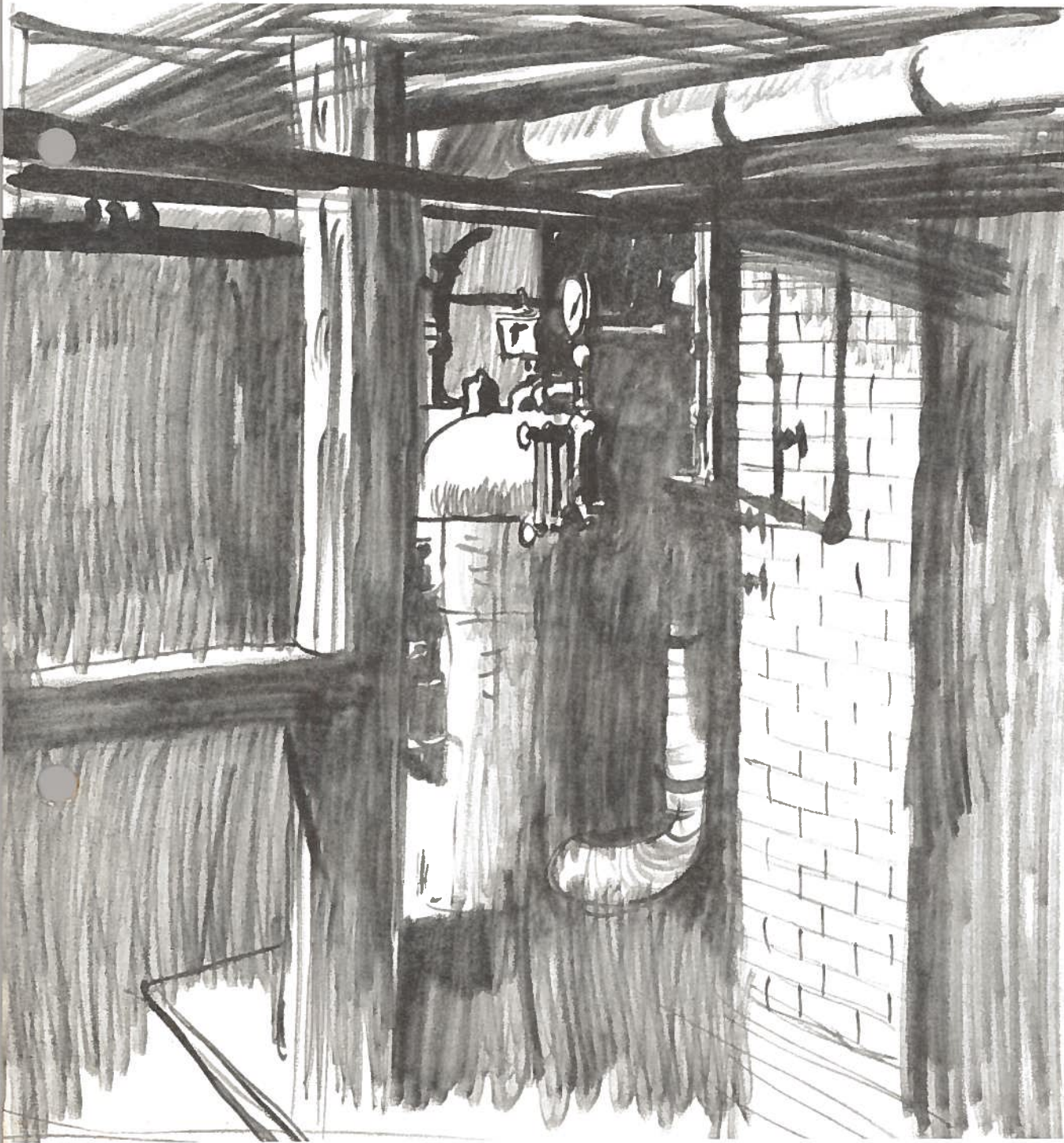
There are many advantages in this particular setting. The oak timbers immediately make this basement seem unique. This is not just *any* basement — it is a *particular* basement. The position of the timbers in the sketch gives an almost architectural

stability to the setting and at the same time suggests exciting compositional possibilities. The bunched-up apparatus of the furnace in the background is well concentrated, and it is apparent immediately that the main action should take place under this eye-catching area of excitement. The light in particular offers possibilities for development.

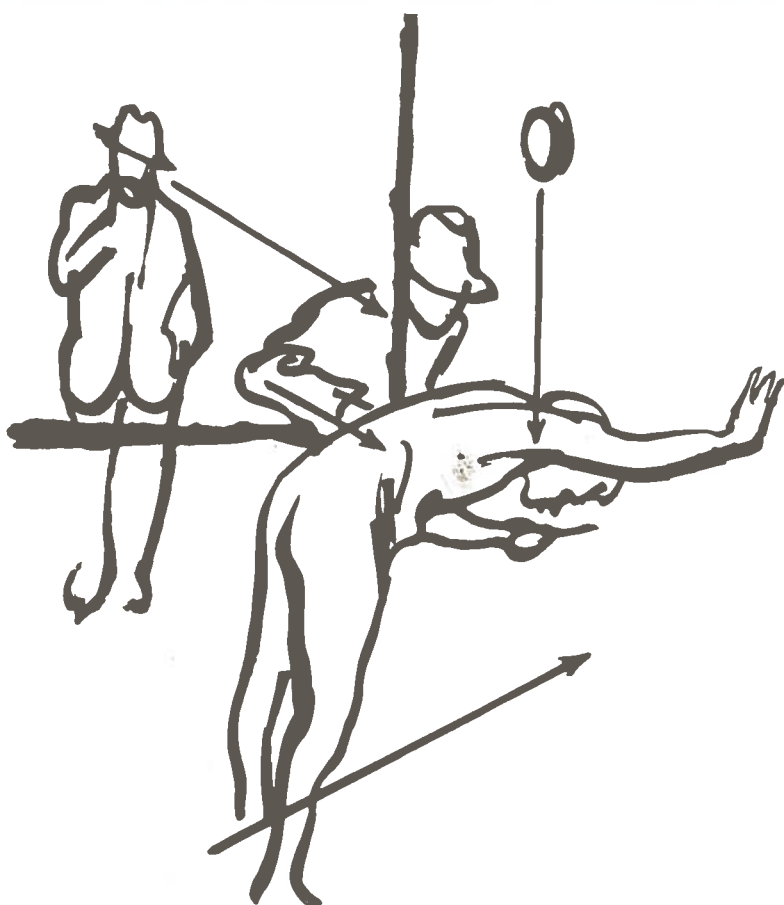
After working up a rough composition on the basis of this background sketch, I began selecting models and photographing. The models were all amateurs. I made no attempt to type-cast them — I chose them because they were able to take direction and get into the general pose and mood I wanted to convey. The figure in the background at the left was drawn from life. The other three figures were developed from photographs.



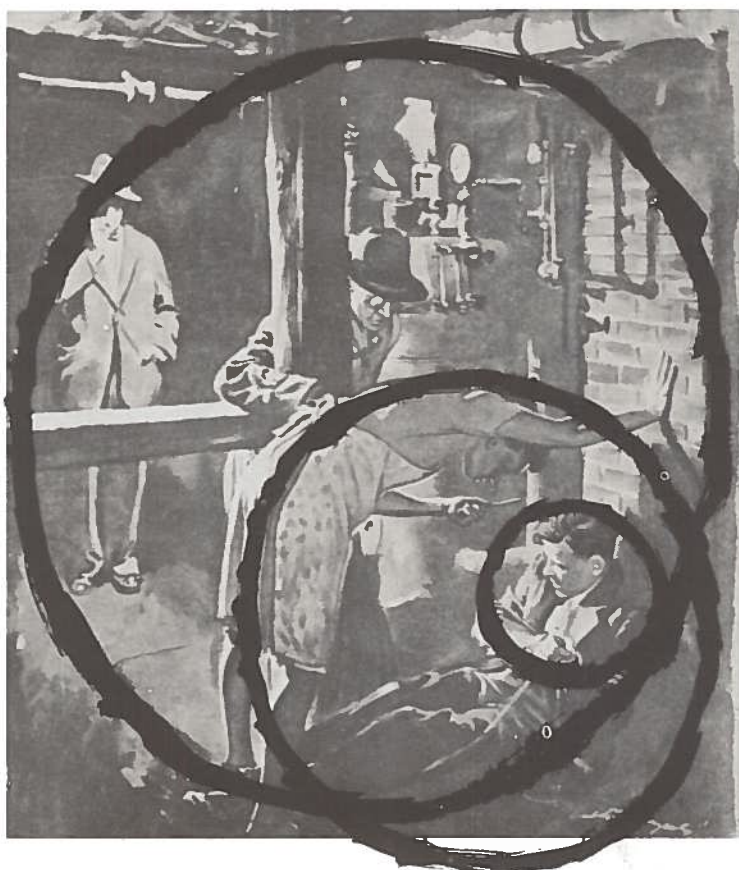
Here is one of the first sketches I made in creating a setting for the picture. Although it was done in the same basement as the sketch I finally used, this background would have been completely wrong. The objects shown are rather ordinary and there is nothing distinctive about the setting. The shapes are all horizontal and static, rather than dynamic. The lighting is completely lacking in dramatic quality. For some other illustration with an entirely different mood this background might have been fine — but for this one, no.



This sketch has the qualities I wanted. As you can see, I have retained practically every important feature in making the final painting. Did I copy the background literally from nature, line for line, object for object? It might appear so at first glance, but remember first of all that in making the sketch I did a great deal of editing. More important, however, was the sinister atmosphere I created in this background through careful treatment of lights and shadows. Even without the characters, the setting as handled in the final painting would have had a sinister quality in itself. The setting has become one of the chief actors in the drama.



This diagram demonstrates how the whole picture is given structural stability through the central cross framework. It also indicates how invisible sight lines have been used to lead the eye to the important storytelling points.



Here we see how the three "wheels within wheels" create an uneasy, whirling quality in the composition which helps convey the dizziness and insecurity of the hero. The circular movement is stimulated by the weight of busy material in the right-hand side of the painting, as compared with the sinister immobility of the framed villain at the upper left. This busy material draws the attention of the observer to the action side of the painting, and "weighs down" the hero by its very mass. Generally speaking, busy areas should be concentrated around the most important storytelling elements of the picture.

Action — or the motivation for the action?

In illustrating this story, I faced the choice which must be made in almost every illustration problem. Should I present a scene of real physical action, with all the characters "doing" something in a strenuous way — or should I underplay the action, developing the psychological implications of the scene and the general mood? I decided to concentrate on what the characters were *feeling*, rather than on what they were *doing*.

As a result, I chose a point in the story development when the four figures are almost motionless. This scene is not the climax of the story. It is a moment of comparative calm, building up in tension, which precedes the climax. The illustration does not give the plot away — it merely intrigues the reader. What has happened? What is going to happen? The person who is curious about this situation must read the story to find out.

Actually there is no real physical movement shown in the picture. The only potential movement is in the knife hand of the woman and the hand of the man in the background puffing on a cigarette. Every pose in the picture is frozen, suggesting that the scene is experienced at one moment and one moment only, almost as though it had been plucked out of time that went before and time that is going to follow.

The abstract composition itself, however, is full of movement. Everything about the way the picture is composed and painted is intended to convey visually some idea of the fix the hero is in. He is obviously being tortured. It is impossible for him to escape. His torturers are clearly cold, implacable people, completely unmoved by human suffering. The painting throughout is deliberately designed to reflect the emotional turmoil of the hero. It is almost as though this were the scene as it appeared through his eyes. Let us examine some of the technical devices used to get these ideas across.

Looking at the situation through the hero's eyes

There is, first of all, the dramatic quality of the lighting. This light is coming from one source above these figures — a perfectly realistic light source. But in the interplay of light and shadow the mental state of the hero is somehow suggested. He is in pain; his mind fluctuates between consciousness and unconsciousness. The light reflects this changing state of consciousness in the way it seems to go off and on as it strikes the edge of one object and causes that object in turn to cast a shadow on another. Portions of the second object are caught in the stream of light, then lost again to be picked up by other spots of light. This effect is something like looking down into a pool and seeing, perhaps, just flashes of moving objects as they appear and disappear in light and shadow.

The composition echoes this same thought: It goes around and around in circles. A large circle circumscribes almost the whole outer edge of the composition. Another circle created by the woman's figure and her shadow against the brick wall continues on around the lower shadowed area of the hero's figure. This circle carries within it still a smaller circle described by the hero's head, shoulders, and arms.

The larger outer circle is used almost like a wheel. The horizontal post connects with the vertical post within the center of

the picture to form spokes of this wheel. The spoke motif is continued by the posture of the woman. Her legs constitute vertical spokes continued by the timber above her. Her upper torso and extended arm, which is braced against the brick wall, continue the horizontal spoke of the timber. The pose of the woman is unusual and graceless; it somehow seemed to express her rather ugly and angular personality. This larger spoked circle is echoed in the circle formed by the hero's upper body. The nervous accented lines of the ropes which bind his hands and body form spokes within this smaller circle.

Symbols heighten mood

This circular motion of the composition is stabilized by the solid structure of the cross formed by the timbers and the woman's body, as well as by the vertical area of light at the right. In a sense the cross symbolizes by association the situation in which the hero finds himself. He is, so to speak, pinned to the cross. I believe the picture, at first glance, is seen as a cross; the hero is noticed only when the implications of the situation are realized.

Most of the composition on the left, both in the lower and upper portions, is kept very simple and handled in simple values. The distant figure at the left, who stands calmly and almost negligently in the background, smoking a cigarette while the torture goes on, is deliberately framed by the posts and beams so that he practically serves as a symbol for the inhuman sadism of the scene. As the evil genius who presides over this activity, he is almost a "Portrait of a Sadist" hanging framed on the wall. He is well set back in the darkness from which he emerged.

The composition on the right is, by contrast, full of light and excitement. The portions of the furnace in the background, which are picked out in light and shade above the hero's head, create a kind of nervous action in this area. Adding to the excitement are the repeated accents of the bricks and the mysterious shadows. The hero's apprehension is expressed by the nervous lines of the ropes which bind him.

Sight lines direct attention

The strongest lines in the picture, which force the observer to concentrate his attention on the hero, are actually not drawn at all. They are "sight lines." Sight lines are exactly what the phrase implies — they are invisible lines of force set up in the direction toward which the characters in the illustration are looking. It's almost impossible to avoid the temptation to look in the same direction we see someone else looking. We do this automatically, and the device is of great use pictorially to focus attention at any given point. Sight lines are just as important compositionally as they would be if they were straight lines drawn from the character's eyes to the object toward which he is looking.

Here the woman is looking at the hero, and the man with his arm draped around the center post is also looking at the hero. The eyes of the framed man at the left are lost in the shadow from his hat brim, but the hat brim itself aims in the direction of the cornered hero and leads our eyes in that direction. Sight lines can be set up not only by the concentrated attention of the characters, but even by abstract shapes and lines which seem to aim in a given direction. For example, the arm of the man draped around the center post is important in the way it points



This brooding figure stands at the left of the picture half-hidden in the darkness. He takes no personal part in the action. Yet his sinister presence inspires the action. I made no attempt to realize his appearance in realistic detail. He is rather a symbol, the evil spirit of sadism which controls this scene.

toward the hero's head. The white gauge on the furnace is purposely placed almost directly above the woman's hand holding the knife in order to focus attention on her hand.

Why this picture was successful

Once the picture is analyzed in this way, it becomes apparent that every line and object is performing some essential function in creating the mood or telling the story. And yet an observer looking at the picture for the first time would be quite unconscious of most of these considerations. He would be aware only of the fact that this was a particular cellar where certain very real people were involved in a horrifying business. He would immediately feel the impact of the *mood* presented.

Practically all the technical means used to get this mood and story across are, so to speak, hidden. I have concentrated on the *end*, rather than the means. This was possible because I approached the picture not as a fabricator of artistic merchandise, but as a human being who felt deeply and intensely the horror of what was going on here. The most important element in the painting was *my feeling about the characters and the situation*. The painting seems realistic and plausible because it is based on a real setting and real people. I have deliberately taken advantage of their accidental qualities in order to preserve the sense of reality and personality.

The picture was to run in two colors. Since I could choose the second color, I picked yellow ochre as being appropriate for the mood. Throughout the picture I mixed the ochre with the black and white. This method of painting has become standard practice on my part, because I have found through sad experience that restricting color to a single spot or area results in very hard color edges in the reproduction. The medium was casein tempera, applied on a Masonite board with a gesso ground.

Advertising illustrations

More than meets the eye

One hot summer day my phone rang, and the Account Executive for American Airlines answered my hello. "Austin, on that December ad," he said, "how about doing a picture of Grandma coming home for Christmas?" A few weeks later I had completed the painting which forms the subject of this case history. Since it is a typical advertising illustration, and since a survey demonstrated that more people read this ad than any other airlines ad during the year, it seems a good example from which to approach advertising illustration in general.

When the Account Executive said he wanted a picture of Grandma, etc., the ideas passing through the back of his mind had very little to do with Grandma. More likely he was thinking, "What I want is an ad — any kind of an ad — that will sell upper middle class people the idea it's easy, efficient and inexpensive to travel by air."

Let's face it — American Airlines asked me to do this picture not because they wanted a pretty page decoration, but because they knew I could give them an effective selling gadget in paint. And that is exactly what I set about to do.

Advertising vs. editorial illustration

Composing an advertising illustration is quite a different problem from creating any other kind of picture. Unfortunately the basic thinking must be directed not by artistic requirements, important as those are, but rather primarily by psychological considerations.

Every element in the advertising illustration must be slanted to appeal to the particular audience or "market" the client is trying to reach. The picture must tell its story directly, so that the page-flipper gets its message in one quick glance. The story must be complete; there is little place for subtlety, suggestion or mystery. The artist may, of course, be subtle in the way he composes the painting and relates his color — but the storytelling aspect of the picture must be obvious. Above all, the painting must create some kind of positive emotional response which leads directly to an enthusiastic acceptance of the product.

In these respects advertising illustrations impose much greater limitations than do editorial pictures. Illustrations for magazine stories often permit the artist a good deal of freedom, both in choosing his subject and in presenting it. The best editorial illustrations do *not* tell a complete story. They merely create a mood reflecting the nature of the story, develop curiosity in the observer's mind about the characters presented, and persuade him to read the story in order to find out who these people are and what happened to them.

Thus the best editorial illustration is often more subtle and suggestive than it is obvious and specific. If it stops the page-flipper and makes him want to read the story, it has done its job successfully. Magazine editors and art directors value originality and imagination — they hire an artist because he possesses those qualities. They pass on his work personally, and if they approve it, it's in.

Advertising illustrations, on the other hand, can leave very little to the imagination. They are expected to be "selling machines." Rather than requiring any active contribution or co-

operation on the part of the observer, these paintings must reach out and grab him, visually speaking.

The procedure by which an advertising illustration reaches the printed page is somewhat as follows. First, the account executive in an advertising agency sits down and dreams up an extensive campaign designed to sell his client's product. Often four or five other men may be involved in setting up this plan. These might include an idea man, a media man who knows exactly what magazines to use for maximum results, the copy chief, the art director of the agency, conceivably two or three other account executives, and possibly the head of the agency.

Once the general advertising program is set up, it is presented to the client for approval. The client, in turn, may have half-a-dozen men to advise him in such matters. These would include his advertising manager, the general sales manager, the promotion manager, one or two vice-presidents or other executives, and all too often his wife, daughter or lady friend. After this multitude of critics has gone over the program with a fine-tooth comb, raising every possible objection, the general advertising schedule for a period of months is established, and the "campaign" gets under way.

Now the account executive proceeds to work out individual ads. He first decides on the specific subject and angle of each ad, preparing a suitable head which will get the copy off to a flying start. Besides the head, he must also develop a good idea for the illustration. The illustration, the head and the logotype are the most important parts of the advertisement. If the general public sees that much, at least some impression has been made. Any further attention the ad gets is, so to speak, gravy.

When the general nature of the ad has been established, the idea is developed by the agency's art director. He makes up several roughs of the ad, including a sketch of the illustration. These roughs, or "comps," are intended to show the client in a general and idealized way what the ad will look like. When the client has approved a "comp" it is returned to the agency and put into production. Now the decision is made as to the right commercial artist to handle the illustration. Frequently a single artist is assigned to do an entire campaign; sometimes a different artist is chosen for each advertisement.

Working with the agency "comp"

At this point things begin to get interesting for you, personally. You open your mail one day, or your agent turns up, and here is an invitation to make a picture, a rough showing you exactly what the agency has in mind, a financial arrangement which is almost satisfactory — more money, in fact, than you've been getting for your editorial pictures — plus a deadline which you must meet. Your first impulse when you glance expectantly at the rough is to throw it on the floor, tramp on it, and curse all art directors, account executives, and clients. Then you begin to cool off and realize that everyone is really trying to do his best. The only sad thing about the situation is the fact that you are stuck with an idea — a graphic physical idea which the art director thinks is terrific, the account executive considers wonderful, and the client has grudgingly admitted might be made into something acceptable.

You have been chosen to do the art job for one of two reasons:



The arrangement of the children in the photograph at the left is bad because it contains balanced, monotonous shapes. Furthermore, the children should be placed close together to form one focal point on which Grandmother can concentrate her attention. The next photo, in the center, served as reference material for the figure of the little girl. I had her stand as close to the doorjam as possible in order to leave enough space for the rest of the story. Her gesture serves both to welcome her Grandmother and to lead the observer's eye toward the American Airlines plane in



the distance. At the right is the photo of the little boy which best expressed the elusive personality traits I wanted to capture. This little fellow is eager for his Grandmother's arrival. However, he is a little shy because she lives some distance away and he doesn't know her very well. This pose expresses his somewhat contradictory feeling. In my sketch he leans forward a little more eagerly, and his head is turned a shade to the right to form a more understandable silhouette.

1) Either you have a successful record of taking art directors' roughs and copying them faithfully — only making them appear so much better that even the art director is happily amazed at the results; or 2) you have a successful record of improving on art directors', account executives', and clients' ideas so effectively that even they are forced to admit what you finally turn out is better in some respects than what they had in mind. Generally speaking, I seem to have established the latter reputation. This is undoubtedly the hard way to make an illustration, but I feel that a client who is paying me to do a job is entitled to whatever creative imagination I may have to offer.

It would be a serious mistake, of course, to attempt making arbitrary changes in an agency "comp" on the basis of whimsy, personal preference, or pure contrariness. Every change must be in the direction of making the basic ideas clearer, more interesting, and more entertaining. No matter how bad the rough may be in some respects, it almost always presents the elements necessary to tell the story, and it contains certain selling ideas which *must* be present in the finished painting. Learning to "read" an agency rough so that you can tell at a glance what it is important to retain and emphasize (as well as what you can play down, change, or leave out) is an art something like learning to read a blueprint.

Usually the "comp" you receive does have serious faults. It is often lacking in creative imagination and basic research. These you must supply. You must also proportion the figures to the space properly and create the kind of feeling and atmosphere the finished painting should have. Very often the basic ideas and much of the material in the agency rough have been swiped — sometimes from you. In that case, of course, it is unuseable. Often your research will turn up a better way to do the job. But in almost every case the *basic elements* of the agency rough should be retained, unless you can suggest a new angle which is obviously so much better than the original that this is apparent to everyone.

Making any change in the original rough is understandably



This pose was one of many taken at high speed to "freeze" the walking action of Grandmother. Notice how the rhythm and the movement of the clothing amplify the action. It would have been difficult to capture this effect if I had been working directly from the model, and a photograph of the model in static pose would have been equally unsatisfactory.

annoying for the agency. First of all, they have already sold the client on one idea, and he is likely to be prejudiced against any other approach — even if it's better. Second, suggesting changes implies that the agency men are not as smart as they want the client to believe. Third, you may give the agency personnel the impression you think you know more about their business than they do. In spite of these facts, by exercising patient persistence and a little tact you may still be able to reach a compromise which in due course will result in a painting much more satisfactory to the agency and the client as well as yourself.

Clients usually demand realism

When it comes to the actual painting process, remember that your painting must normally be done with almost photographic realism. Every object must be presented with clarity and definition. In making an editorial illustration it is necessary to please only one or two individuals, and these are likely to be men of some imagination and understanding. But an advertising painting will frequently run the gamut of more than a dozen people, each of whom may have his own reasons for discovering one fault or another. Somewhere along the line between the agency's office boy and the client's wife there is going to be at least one person who thinks something could be painted more realistically. You will probably develop the habit of anticipating these helpful suggestions and learn to make the "corrections" before the painting leaves the studio.

I have frequently been asked by an agency to do an advertisement just the way I would do an illustration; that is, to paint the most important portion with great clarity, and minimize other sections which really should be less prominent. Sometimes, with a great effort of will and a spirit of adventure, I have tried to do this. The pictures I have painted in this way have been better. I do find, however, that I have become thoroughly conditioned over the years to anticipating the kind of criticism I know my advertising paintings will get. As a result it has become very difficult to maintain the same emotional point of view when painting an ad that I have in making an editorial illustration.

In the case of this particular American Airlines Christmas advertisement, I did not have to work with an agency rough. Fortunately the account executive for American Airlines agrees with the idea that he is paying for the artist's imagination as well as his paint. He is willing to put up with hurt feelings within the agency and the client's office, provided he can achieve better results by taking advantage of the artist's suggestions. Since I have been doing pictures for this account regularly, both the agency and the client knew pretty well what to expect and were willing to let me work out the problem in my own way.

For the first few days after I received the assignment I did little but think about it. This preliminary planning, however, was probably the most important phase of the picture-making process. Obviously, I reasoned, Grandmother will be arriving at a house in the suburbs — it would be too difficult a trip if the house were set in the country — and her means of arrival from the airport should be shown. The characters will include her daughter and son-in-law, as well as her grandchildren. Above all, it will be important to include an American Airlines plane overhead. The composition must be organized in such a way that the observer will notice the plane at first sight.

Since this advertisement is intended to appeal to an upper middle class market, the neighborhood, the houses, the clothing on the figures, and the whole general atmosphere should reflect this standard of living. A slight amount of what might be considered "snob appeal" would be useful in the picture. For instance, the house at which Grandmother is arriving can be a little better and a little more impressive architecturally than any other house included in the picture.

It would be important, of course, to give the picture an obvious "Christmas" atmosphere. The story of Grandma coming home for the holidays must be clear to anyone at once.

After I had settled on these ideas, the next step was to turn the raw material into graphic images. I had already decided in a general way what I thought the characters in the painting should look like, although I had not definitely settled on the models. There remained the question of whether I should use an outdoor setting and show Grandmother approaching the house; or, on the other hand, choose a vantage point inside the house from which her arrival could be seen through the doorway.

For a number of practical reasons I discarded the exterior setting almost immediately. It would be easier, simpler, and more direct to show the scene as viewed through the front door. This would make it possible to center attention on Grandmother, who would be seen full-face, while minimizing the less important characters. The memory of a friend's house flashed through my mind — particularly the front door as seen from the inside, with the newel post of the stairway quite near it. Taking my camera with me, I went over to see if my hunch had been correct.

Posing the models

The doorway turned out to be just as I had remembered it. I decided to take some photos, including models in the setting to give it scale and help me to decide on its possibilities. When I was trying to visualize the picture, several neighborhood children had come to mind as being ideal for the job. They had never posed for me before, and seldom modeled for anyone. It turned out that they were playing at home. Since they lived right down the block, they were on hand a few minutes after I called.

The lady who owns the house, a good friend of mine, agreed to stand in for the figure of the Grandmother. She was not the proper age, but that was not important at the moment. Actually, when I developed my shots she seemed so perfect for the role in action and dress that I decided to use her anyway, making her appear older when I did the painting.

Only a few props were required. It seemed logical that Grandmother would be carrying packages for the children — not very large ones, however, since she had come by plane. I wrapped a box in Christmas paper to suggest the holiday atmosphere. The other prop was a sweater box which happened to be at hand.

The hat and coat were also props which seemed appropriate to express the personality of the Grandmother. I think it's rather interesting to recall how frequently elderly women who dress in a more or less drab way befitting their age will wear brilliant colors in hats. This hat is red, in contrast to her otherwise drab apparel, and it's pretty horrible. But it symbolizes the type of person I wanted to portray. Grandmother's clothes help place her, I should say, as just upper middle class. And that's one of the most important considerations in making this painting.





This was the sketch used for the house across the street. I had made it some months before, during the winter, as preliminary work for a painting I had planned to do just for fun. To remind me of what the original colors had been like, I made a few notes directly on the sketch. The sketch itself was done with a Flo-master brushpen.

This reproduction shows how the picture looked as it appeared in advertisements for American Airlines. The general color scheme is naturally warm, to suggest the friendliness of the scene. Red and green are standard Christmas colors, and it was essential to include them. The red of the Grandmother's hat is closely related to the red of the Christmas decoration. However, it contains more orange because it is lighted by the warm light of the sun rather than the cool, reflected light from the sky. The red of the hat, being small in area, is attracted to the larger area of red in the decoration. This relationship helps draw Grandmother into the house and creates a sense of movement in the picture. The eye travels between these two colors easily because the purplish color of the little girl's sweater, related to the two reds, helps span the gap. The reds, browns, purples, and blue in the foreground

are related to the red of the wreath. The furpiece on the Grandmother's coat is related to the red hair of the children. It serves almost as a pedestal for her head, while the green shutters in back of her make a kind of frame. The red of the hat is very warm and intense, which makes it come forward, while the green of the shutters is very grayed, which keeps them in the background. The husband was given a yellow scarf, and this warm color brings him forward toward the observer. The shadows have all been kept warm. Highlights, on the other hand, are cool. Areas lighted by reflection are colored by the reflecting surface. On Page 85 you will find step-by-step photographs showing my procedure in making this painting, from the pencil drawing on a gesso panel to the final stage of adjusting colors and values.

Many ways of posing the children occurred to me. I first tried them separated, on either side of the door, but I felt this divided the interest too much. They would work out better compositionally, I thought, if they were kept close together. Arranged in this fashion, I could concentrate on them as one pattern, and also express some of their personality a little better. The girl is somewhat older and more confident than the little boy; she stands upright in the doorway, holding her gift for her grandmother. The boy, younger and possibly a little more shy, stands slightly hidden behind his sister and peeks around her skirt. I took a large number of shots. Two of those shown here were combined in making the finished painting.

I now had photographic material on the setting and the principle characters. In order to keep the appeal simple and direct, I decided merely to suggest the mother's presence by showing her arm, hand, and part of her dress as she comes downstairs; her husband would appear in the middle distance.

There was still the question of what to put across the street. It would be logical to place a house there, to suggest that these people live in the suburbs. The minute I began to think about the picture, I remembered a sketch of a house I had made the previous winter. It seemed just the material I needed.

This experience has become an uncanny part of my procedure by this time — this business of gathering material, for no immediate purpose, apparently, and then having it turn out to be exactly what I want for some commercial assignment a few months later. Material of this kind, which I have developed purely for my own enjoyment, has a quality which the usual scrap lacks. These are bits of my own personal reaction and experience. They have a particularity and personal quality which make them seem natural and genuine.

Of course I could have invented a house like the one I had sketched. It might even have had a lattice on the porch and shutters like those above Grandmother's head, but the chances are these peculiar details would have been missing. Little touches like these make this house an individual house, set in a particular place, and the picture as a whole seems more real and more convincing as a result.

Frequently, in illustrations, figures of human beings are more or less completely realized through the use of models or photographs, but the background is obviously faked. The artist apparently feels that it is not important enough to warrant his attention. In these cases the faked background makes the whole picture seem a concoction, as far as I am concerned, rather than a completely realized representation of a scene or situation.



In designing this picture I attempted first of all to create an interesting story-telling situation which would engage the attention of the reader. However, it seemed to me that the "product," as symbolized by the plane, was also of great importance. When I had decided what the story elements would be, I arranged them with the position of the plane constantly in mind and planned the rhythmic organization of the entire picture to lead the eye to the plane, as this diagram shows.

Making the finished pencil sketch

With my decision to use this house in the background, I had all the necessary material to begin working out my pencil sketch. The composition was already pretty well established. As usual, the material itself — particularly the setting — did most of the work for me.

I began by projecting one of the doorway photographs on tissue paper, using a Balopticon. This was to be the basis for the finished pencil drawing. Next I made freehand pencil studies of the girl and boy on separate pieces of tissue, working from the photographs and exaggerating the figures wherever it seemed desirable to express their action a little more clearly than the photographs seemed to have done. When the sketches satisfied me, I moved these separate pieces of tissue around on the background sketch of the interior and traced down the two figures where they seemed to work out best compositionally.

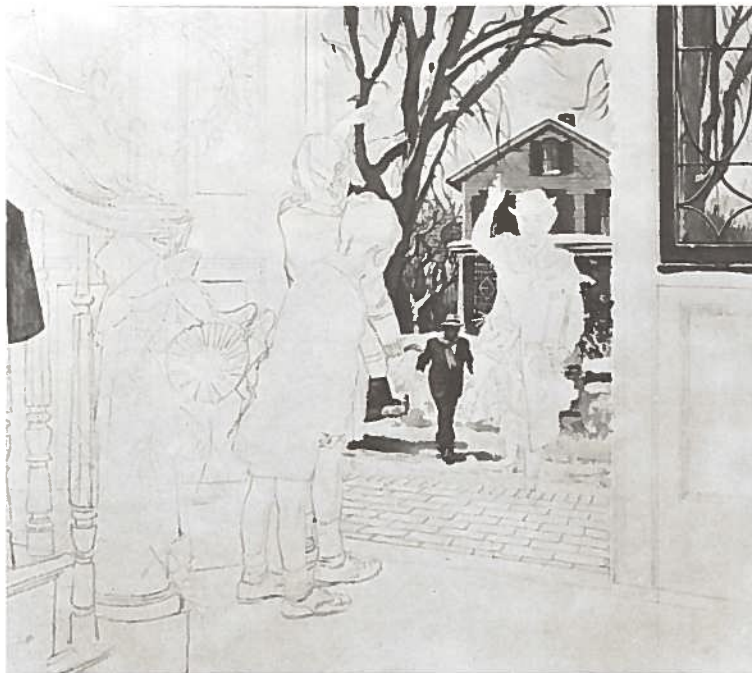
I then drew in the background house across the street, working freehand with pencil and using my original sketch for information. Some changes were made, of course. The house became a little more narrow to make it seem a little less pretentious and to suggest that it was not quite as good as the one Grandmother was visiting. The pitch of the roof was increased for compositional purposes, since I was arranging the whole design with the final position of the airplane in mind.

Next I put a photograph of Grandmother in the Balopticon and projected her figure on my tissue drawing. I traced her down in pencil, lengthening and slimming her figure as I drew. To accentuate the action I pointed her stepping foot a little more directly toward the porch. I then called my wife into the studio, and while she posed I drew in the hand and arm of the mother. After penciling in the husband carrying Grandmother's bags, I decided exactly where the airplane should go, and drew that.

The entire picture now existed on one sheet of tissue in pencil outline. This tissue drawing was submitted to the account executive for an OK from American Airlines. The basic sketch was approved just as I had drawn it. Somewhere along the line, however, the bright idea developed that a Christmas decoration ought to be hung on the newel post. I must admit that this suggestion did not strike me as a very happy inspiration. As a result, I did a rather clumsy job in complying. If I were doing the picture over again, very likely I'd handle the problem in a somewhat different way. As it stands now, the Christmas bells and ribbon destroy the silhouetted shape of the little boy. The overlapping does add to the sense of depth, but I think the loss was more than the gain.

Another factor which disturbs me very much now is the rear end of the car, which appears just under the little girl's package. If this picture had been made for editorial use, I would have left the car out entirely. Since it is an advertising picture, I had to include the car to explain how Grandmother got from the airport to the house. I should probably have placed it on the right, however, in the area near Grandmother's leg, rather than in the confusing position it now occupies.

With the pencil tissue complete and approved, I was ready to trace it down and render the finished painting.

Making the painting — step by step

1 After coating the back of the tissue sketch with graphite, I traced the drawing down on gesso board. I frequently use gesso as the ground for oil paints. It has the advantage of soaking up the turpentine medium very rapidly, and at the same time it eliminates the "overjuicy" effect typical of oils. I personally try to avoid this quality in my work. Since the gesso surface is chalky, the material tends to rub off and mix with the pigment, giving all the colors a rather grayed tone. To get pure colors it is necessary to lay them on very thick or put on two coats. I usually begin rendering my pictures by laying in the portion farthest from the eye. This enables me to apply the paint freely, and I never have to "paint around" objects. For instance, I can carry through a cloud formation consistently. In this case I began work first on the sky, and then went on to the object next in depth — the group of trees seen above the husband's figure. Then I worked on the house across the street, the trees at the left, the snow in front of the houses, the rear of the automobile, and finally the figure of the husband carrying the bags. This was the last figure to be added to the pencil sketch — but the first figure to be painted.



2 Moving still closer in space, I began painting the figure of Grandmother. Since I was using a gesso ground, sufficient medium had been absorbed so that the paint was almost dry. This technique enables me to paint over still-wet color where necessary, but at the same time I can unite a foreground figure with the background when I want to by dragging some of the background paint into it. Since the background values had already been established, it was easy for me to judge just how the values in the Grandmother must be adjusted to make her come forward. The more distant your objects are from the picture plane, the lighter they are in value, the grayer in color, and the lower in intensity. The nearer they are to the eye, the more definite they become, and the stronger the values and colors are. The children's heads were next blocked in very simply, and the legs rendered with consideration for reflected light.



3 Before carrying the children any further, I decided to lay in the colors and values of the interior so that I could more definitely set the rendering of the children in relation to these areas. After the architectural detail had been indicated roughly, I was ready to brush in more or less flat tones for the children's clothing, shoes, and stockings. With this done, it was easy to decide that the Grandmother's gloves should be dark, and her hat red. I could also define her face and its relation with both foreground and background. The girl's head was then carried a little further toward completion. The boy's head and legs are almost finished at this stage.



4 Now the mother's hand and arm have been painted in at the left, accents have been added to the newel post, and detail worked into the Christmas decoration. I later eliminated much of the detail in the decoration because it attracted too much attention and made it difficult for the eye to concentrate on the main figures. After painting the wreath on the door a little more realistically I began the final important work of adjusting colors and values, pulling the whole painting together. As you followed this step-by-step procedure, you may have thought I finished one section completely, and then another, until the whole painting was finished by the time the last element was painted in. That is not true. Often I lay in sections very generally at first, and work over them again and again as the painting process goes on. Every area and detail in the picture is subject to change right up to the last minute, when I am satisfied that the whole painting works together as a single unit.



One More for the Skylark

By J. R. MORTON

FROM THE HILL IN DUNKIRK HE LOOKED BACK ACROSS A FEW YEARS AND A FEW MILES OF DANGER & GUILT—AT THE HEAVENLY HAD A NOW WITH FIVE AND THE KING A STIRRING STORY OF A SOLDIER BEATEN BUT NOT DEFEATED

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He had heard the name "Dunkirk" several times during the last three or four days, and had understood that it was the end of the journey. The retreat would be over, because Dunkirk meant the sea . . . There would now be time to rest. He was dizzy when he finally found the moldering buttress of a breakwater. Slowly, like a very old man, he lowered himself and sat down with his back against the wood.

These are the author's words I chose to illustrate. He added that the soldier was well disciplined. "He carefully propped his rifle across his knees out of the sand. There might be further orders. The soldier almost fell asleep, and began to think of his wife and small children across the strip of Channel, in England." The entire story concerned this one man, his longing to see his family once more, and his eventual deliverance from Dunkirk aboard a small boat on which he had once, by coincidence, enjoyed a holiday with his family.

This soldier is involved in the evacuation of Dunkirk, but at the moment he is taking no active part in the fighting or the evacuation itself. He is unable to do anything more for the moment than to remember nostalgically his past happiness with his wife and children. The man is an individual, and the situation presented is fairly intimate and personal. At the same time, however, he is a symbol of all brave and beaten men.

He and little and the two kids, he said. "Yes, I had seen the whole for a time—where whole days of it.

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In the main illustration, my objective was to discover the largest concept behind this particular situation. Therefore the man, the distant figures, and the setting are all treated as symbols of universal experience. At the same time, however, every detail was handled as authentically as possible, and I attempted to give this soldier individuality and personality. To show the reader what he was thinking about, I placed a spot drawing on the facing page. In effect this serves the same purpose as a "thought balloon" in a cartoon. He remembers particularly a vacation he took some time before with his wife and children at one of the watering places in England. This theme, too, is universal. I therefore posed the figures in an almost classical way. The baby is reminiscent of a Florentine bambino, and might have appeared in a della Robbia medallion. The main illustration was done twice reproduction size in oil on a Masonite panel with a gesso ground. The spot was also done twice up in Winsor & Newton Designers' Colors on cold pressed Whatman illustration board.

Case History No. 4 — One More For The Skylark

Picturing the eternal truth underlying the particular incident

"He had heard the name 'Dunkirk' several times during the last three or four days, and had understood that it was the end of the journey. The retreat would be over, because Dunkirk meant the sea . . . There would now be time to rest. He was dizzy when he finally found the moldering buttress of a breakwater. Slowly, like a very old man, he lowered himself and sat down with his back against the wood."

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The author had undoubtedly intended that his hero should be considered in this light. Throughout this portion of the story, the soldier is not identified by name, but merely referred to as "he." The caption I chose to illustrate also referred to him as "he." The man is clearly a symbol, as well as an individual. He is a symbol of a strong man defeated; and his intimate and personal thoughts in this situation parallel those of all men who face the summing up of life in a foreign land in an unexpected hour.

When I had read this story I walked down to the beach near my home, which is situated on Long Island Sound. I had with me a pad and pencil, and I sat down on the sand opposite a breakwater. Imagining the soldier was in front of me, I began making sketches as I tried to feel how he would be feeling, and, forgetting myself, let the thoughts he must have been thinking wander through my mind.

At the same time, almost beyond my direct control, the experienced artist in me was searching for a pattern and design which would prove visually interesting and still express the story mood most effectively in visual terms. The man, this artist side of me reasoned, is tired and beaten. Therefore his shape, in relation to the other shapes in the design, must be static and unmoving. His introspective expression is to be an important element, so the figure must be shown close up and the head placement considered

with care. The background must set the locale, but it must not detract from the observer's concentrated attention on the soldier as an individual. This individuality of the soldier must be dual: He must be a particular person, a *specific* man with unique personality; but at the same time he must also be a symbol of all brave men.



Sketch 1

This is one of the first roughs I made as I sat there sketching. The side view proved too impersonal. Furthermore, the diagonal lines of the breakwater move in opposition to the line of the soldier's rifle, setting up opposed forces which are too dynamic to suggest repose. When surrounded by the outer perimeter of the picture space these forces would be even more dynamic. I took a new piece of paper and began over again.



Sketch 2

This composition is more intimate because the soldier faces us directly, but the backward-bending head does not convey introspection. The whole concept is too melodramatic. The legs predict potential movement, which is contrary to the mood to be projected.



Sketch 3

Now the scale of the figure in relation to the picture plane is just about right to express the figure's relative importance in comparison with the surrounding area. The proximity of the breakwater and the figure, designed as they are with similar diagonals, is good because it relates them one to the other as a single stable form. However, the united form is sensed as moving toward the left and upward out of the picture area. The strong diagonals, placed in this upper part of the composition, create this effect. This tendency toward movement contradicts the idea of stolid repose I am trying to produce. Earlier in the course we have discussed why shapes behave in this way.



Sketch 4

Suddenly I realized that the breakwater itself, seen head-on, was a very interesting shape; perhaps the entire picture might be designed with the breakwater as the starting point. I made this study. The solid wedge shape was exciting in the way it expressed depth by the overlapping planes of logs moving backward toward the horizon. The previous sketches had remained static partly because I had the breakwater parallel to the picture plane.

Since the expression of depth is not only an interesting problem in the construction of an illustration, but also adds much to the sense of place and the reality of the situation, I decided to use the breakwater somewhat as I had sketched it. The next step was to get a model and go ahead with my finished pencil. An English friend who fitted my conception of the soldier consented to pose for me. In order to make sure the props would be authentic, I hunted up an English uniform and an English rifle.



These sketches were done directly from the model at the beach, using a fountainbrush. They are reproduced actual size.

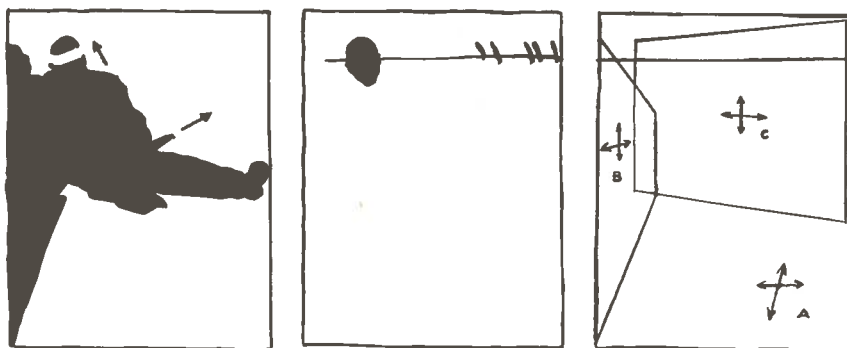
On the opposite page is my working drawing of the model. It was made at the beach, with my friend leaning against the breakwater. The story said the man had a blood-soaked bandage around his head. This is a symbol — almost a cliché. It is a very melodramatic one, so I made every effort in posing the figure to underplay the drama in order to keep the whole thing from being *too* melodramatic, and therefore too unreal.

I tried a couple of variations of one of the soldier's hands, and two variations of his head position. The angle of the head shown in the finish proved the more satisfactory, since it is close to the angle of the breakwater itself and therefore relates the figure to the breakwater a little more closely.

In this drawing I didn't make much attempt to express the volumes of the figure beneath the clothing in an academic way. I was thoroughly aware of the underlying form, however. As you can see, I made circles for the position of the knee caps and sketchy lines through the figure to find the position of the rib cage and the clavicle. The clothing hid these parts and I had to know where they were. Otherwise I made little effort to analyze the figure as a figure, looking more for the *contour* as expressed by the outer clothing.

I then began the finished pencil, tracing this working sketch down on tissue, and building the finished composition around it. I kept the figure large and close up to retain the intimacy of the expression. To suggest the solitude of this man I created a large amount of space in back of him. This space is expressed through the overlapping of rocks in the foreground, with a diminishing amount of texture as the space recedes. The breakwater narrows in perspective as it goes back, carrying the eye with it.

A sense of vast space — "expanding" space — is created behind the figure by the angle of the rifle as related to the man's arm. These two lines expand as they go back, widening the space behind the figure. An emphasis on mechanical perspective would have narrowed the space. The sense of depth is reinforced by the difference in scale between the foreground figure and the figures in the background. A final factor which contributes to the sense of space is the gradually diminishing tinting power of the color as the ground recedes.



The diagram at the left shows how the soldier and the breakwater form one shape which is firmly attached to the left border of the picture. This stability of structure helps express the mood of stolid introspection. The angle formed by the rifle and the soldier's arm creates an effect of *expanding* space in back of the figure. The second diagram shows how the horizon line was placed to fix attention on the soldier's head. The background figures contribute balance and movement to the picture, while at the same time carrying the eye to the left toward the center of interest. The third diagram shows the three planes which were established to create a sense of depth in the picture and mark out the "playing" space.

Even a quiet picture must have movement

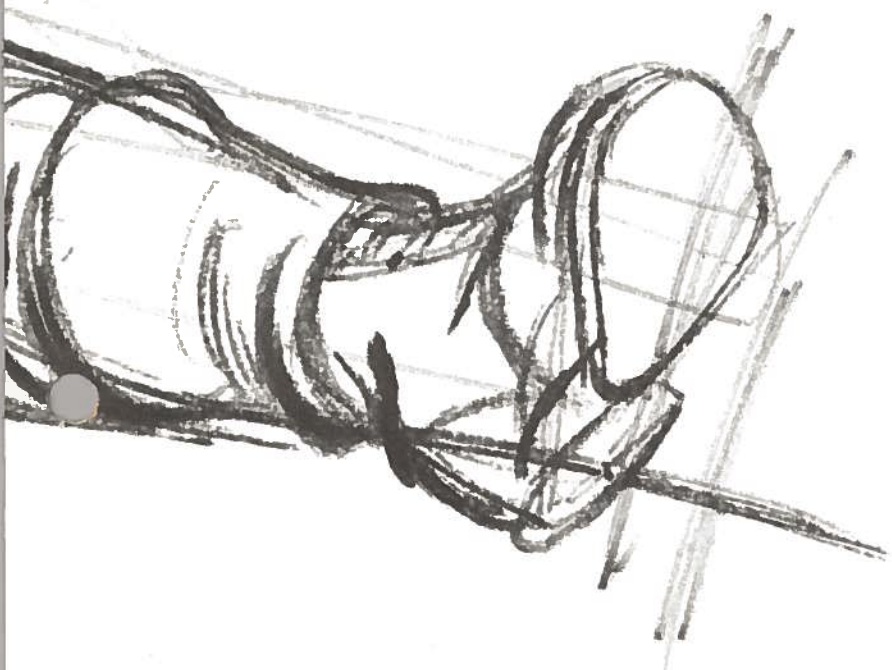
Solitude and introspection are the essential qualities I wanted to capture in this picture. However, it was necessary to keep the composition from becoming *completely* static. It was also important to relate the scene to the evacuation of Dunkirk. The small running figures in the background accomplish both objectives. They are inserted where they are for compositional reasons. The horizon line, against which they are silhouetted, was established through the head of the main figure in order to fix the eye at this point. These moving figures help concentrate attention upon the center of interest by forcing the eye along the horizon toward the head.

The sense of movement created by the poses of the background figures is increased by the fact that they are related in color to the more distant smoke rising from the area just in back of the breakwater at the extreme left. They are therefore pulled toward that border even though one of the small figures is actually fastened to the right-hand border.

The large figure of the soldier creates a substantial weight on the left side of the picture, yet the composition is balanced. This balance is established first of all by the fact that the man's figure is part of the breakwater shape, which is attached firmly and immovably to the left border of the picture. On the other hand, the small moving figures in the right background draw the eye to the right and thus create a balance of visual interest. Almost any movement within the picture area will attract the eye, no matter how small the moving object may be, as against an object or area felt to be static.

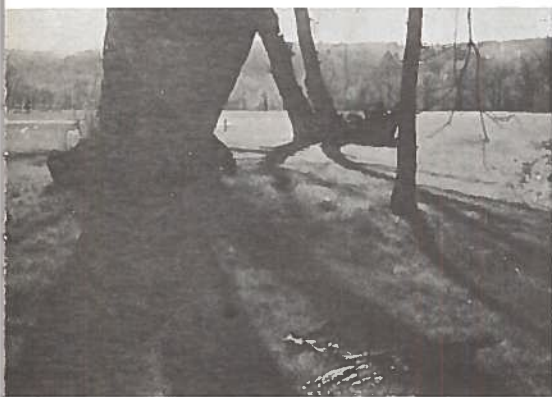
The rising smoke from a dropped bomb in the center background was an atmospheric prop inserted to increase the sense of movement and activity in the distance. It provides a contrast with the static quality of the main figure. Closely related to the lower receding line of the breakwater in its general direction, it is thus an integrated part of the over-all picture.

The light source is almost directly above and a little to the right of the main figure. Since the figure and the whole setting are highly dramatic, I kept the lighting as simple as possible. Unusual lighting would have overdramatized the scene.

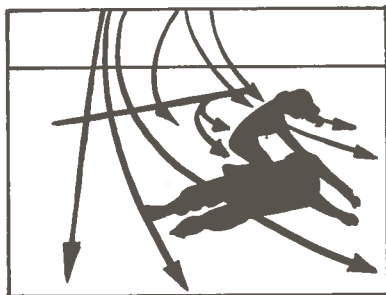


Case History No. **5** — My Love Will Come

Human drama vs. the drama of nature



This photo of trees from my scrap file was the starting point from which I developed the finished illustration shown below.



The shadow lines move powerfully toward the darkness which is rapidly enveloping the scene. Notice how the lines of the girl's body are tied into these moving shadow lines. The rigid figure of the man opposes these lines at right angles, and he is fixed more firmly in place because his body parallels the trees.

Often in a moment of personal tragedy we wonder how nature can ignore the sorrow that has completely disrupted our personal world. As far as can be seen, nature goes on around us unfeeling and unmoved. It is this problem that I tried to state in this painting — this mysterious relationship between the human drama and the drama of nature.

The story situation I had chosen to illustrate set me thinking about this matter. The author stressed the fact that the terrible experience in the life of the girl awakened no echo in the world around her. Her grandfather had died and she suddenly found herself alone, but the sky, the water, and the earth remained as bright and gay as they had been before.

The usual manner of presenting tragic scenes, using somber, dark, mysterious colors, would have been inadequate for this illustration. I could have done the scene in that way, for it was shortly before the sunset and an incident chosen a little later in the action would have justified the use of dark values and colors. However, it seemed to me that the best illustration for this story would attempt to show the mystery, the sadness, and the loneliness of personal tragedy while at the same time emphasizing the small and almost unheeded part this separate experience plays in the great natural drama.

In looking through my files for suitable background material I came across a photo of some trees which I had made a number of years ago in New England. The combined shapes of the trees and shadows immediately suggested a compositional idea which would express what I had in mind. The trunks could easily be rendered as palm trunks, and the strong backlighting, with the lengthened shadows, would immediately establish the time of day and show that the sun is near its setting. Presumably there are only a few minutes of daylight left. The emphasis on the brevity of time would give an added sense of urgency.

With the background tentatively set, I began working on poses for the figures. My first concern was to make the action as graphically convincing as I could. Since the man is too heavy for the girl to drag or carry, she is rolling him over and over on the sand. In searching for the right pose I made a number of experimental sketches. Working later with the models, I developed the pose I finally used.

The two figures, of course, are handled quite differently. The man is limp and heavy, almost unyielding in his insensible weight. His outstretched arms are stiff and immobile. The gaping area between his shirt and pants somehow seems to underscore this unnatural helplessness. His face is hidden — both be-





These are a few of the sketches I made in working out the relationship of the dead man and the girl.

cause it might have been unpleasant to show what he looked like at this moment, and also to create a sense of mystery. The reader wonders who this man is, and what his relationship with the girl may be. I often leave something in the picture completely unexplained, when I can do it plausibly, simply to arouse speculation in the reader's mind.

In strong contrast with the man's figure, everything about the girl is vibrant with life and tension. Her body is bent like a bow, her arm taut with the exertion of pushing this weight which she can hardly move. Her disheveled hair is electric with excitement. It forms the most dramatic and busy area in the painting and is done in the darkest values. Thus it attracts immediate attention to her face. This exciting, moving silhouette seems at first a naturalistic rendering of hair blowing in the wind, but the chief reason for presenting it in this way was to express graphically the confusion of her psychological mood.

The combined shape of the figures is carefully integrated with the rest of the composition, as the diagrams reveal. The lengthened areas of the shadows move powerfully down and out of the painting toward the observer and, in a sense, toward the darkness which will shortly engulf the entire scene. The line of the man's body crosses these shadows at right angles in strong opposition.

The girl's back, head, and arm create a positive triangular shape which is closely related to the negative triangular shape between the two clumps of trees. It is almost as though she were a part of a jigsaw puzzle; she has been picked up from the triangular area between the trees and set down farther forward in the picture space. The triangle formed by the girl is larger than the triangle between the trees, but the very increase in size suggests that she is moving forward toward the observer.

At the same time the line of the girl's arm continues the line of the tree just above and behind her, forming one of the longest lines suggested in the picture. This relates the action of the figures to the long areas of the shadows and forms of the trees, maintaining the quiet, resigned, and rather somber rhythms of the natural forms.

Opposing the majority of lines which move vertically or diagonally through the picture space is the long horizontal ribbon of the ocean. I deliberately accented this by making it dark in value. It bisects the opposing shapes of the trees much as the figure of the man bisects the forms of the shadows. Running as it does through the long horizontal of the picture from side to side, it suggests the continuity of nature and immensity of the natural process. It was made heavy and placed close above the girl's head to weigh her down and provide a controlling opposition to the spring-like tension of her figure.

There are a number of minor details in the picture which appear very unimportant. Such touches are the broken clump of stumps at the right of the trees, the waving grasses at the left of the trunks, the distant island, the buoy out at sea, and the sudden flight of birds.

I have often mentioned my feeling that nothing should be included in a picture if the picture could do without it. The details just mentioned were inserted very deliberately for what I considered adequate reasons. In addition to adding atmosphere and establishing the locale, they have very definite practical functions to discharge.

The stumps at the right of the smaller trees were retained from the photograph in order to make that area of the painting seem more informal. Without them the whole picture would have been a little too obviously "arranged." It is this kind of apparently accidental touch which makes a carefully organized picture appear, at least superficially, to be much more intimate and informal. This seemingly casual quality greatly increases the emotional effectiveness of the illustration.

The blowing grasses rising from the bottom of the tree on the left side of the picture may appear to be incidental brush strokes which might as well have been omitted, but they serve what seems to me an important function. Without them this area of beach would be about the same width and have the same general length of shoreline as the neighboring area of beach between the tree clumps. The addition of the grass differentiates this area of the shore. The individual lines are integrated into the picture as a whole by having them echo the direction in which the shadows travel and the pose of the girl's body.

The birds rising from the distant sea add to the atmosphere and help set the locale. But they also help convey the thought that the life of nature is going on without regard for individual human beings. The fact that they are moving to the left, in opposition to the direction in which the girl is moving, adds greater action to the picture.

The island in the far distance creates additional weight over the head of the girl. It also attracts attention to this area, and keeps the eye from wandering too far away from the girl and her action. The buoy out at sea is such a small touch that it may seem utterly unimportant—and perhaps it is of extremely minor importance. It does add another accent which concentrates the observer's attention on the girl. If it were to be included at all, it had to be placed in the spot it occupies. At any other point in the water it would have seemed meaningless.

To accentuate the sense of vibrant life in the landscape the color was kept very warm and full of light. The sand is a bright coral pink, with cooler, more violet cast shadows from the trees and figures. The setting sunlight falling on the girl's back and the man's body is very warm. The edges of the trees are touched with warm color, and even the highlights in the water near the distant shore are warm.

The entire background is handled with soft edges. Even the man's figure is underplayed, without strong accents of color, edges, or values. Only the girl's figure is presented sharply and positively, with crisp edges and strong contrasts. Compare the wrinkles in her blouse, tense and taut, with the soft folds and limp draping of the man's pants and shirt.

At first glance this picture seems extremely simple. Essentially, it is. But every shape, line, color, and value has been used functionally to make the illustration as telling as possible. Not all of the factors I have discussed above were planned and used consciously and deliberately. Much of the procedure was instinctive, based on long experience. An artist learns to *feel* what a painting needs at any given point; it is sometimes best *not* to try and analyze the problem on the conscious level during the painting process. However, I usually take time later to study what instinct told me to do, and I try to decide whether my instinct was right. The art of becoming a better artist is, to a large extent, the art of learning self-criticism.



This was my first rough and, as you can see, it could not possibly work. Instead of suggesting passive death, its propeller-like shape suggests violent action.



Here I have come closer to the final realization by suggesting the horizontal length of the bed. However, the figure itself or the form which the figure takes, still suggests the possibility of too much movement.



This is closer to the desired effect. The hat suggested beside the man's foot makes a relieving pattern to the mass of black which forms his trousers, and finally became the small match cover by his knee in the finished painting.

Case History No. 6 — A Matter of Life and Death

Using pattern to suggest feeling

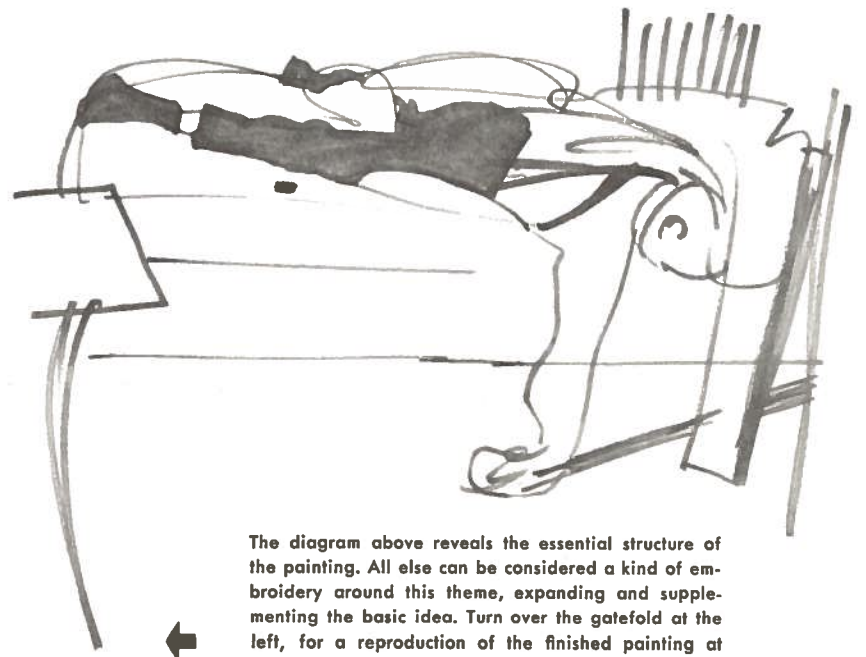
When the art director of *Cosmopolitan* asked me to illustrate the story titled "A Matter of Life and Death," he requested me to portray the blurb for the story which read as follows: "He could not remember clearly what had happened; but one thing was starkly plain: a man had been killed, and soon the police would be looking for the murderer."

I kept his request in mind, and in addition, handled the picture in a way to symbolize the mood of the story as a whole. It opened with the hero awakening in a disordered room; it was broad daylight but he had slept in some of his clothes and the remainder were strewn about the floor. He had the worst hang-over ever. As he raised his hands to hold his throbbing head, he glanced at his fingernails and saw to his horror that there was dried blood beneath them. His body was bruised but no wounds were present to account for the blood. He sat and held his head and tried to remember what might have happened, as the room went around and around. Gradually, his memory of the previous night returned and he realized that what he was remembering was the figure of a man on a bed — very, very dead. He could not recall whether he had killed him, but feared he might have done so in a drunken brawl. The remainder of this story concerned the hero's efforts to trace his movements back in time and find out what had really taken place. It was a typical "whodunit."

I finally settled on a sketch much like the finish. The flat, horizontal motif of the figure is a calm static line in itself suggesting no movement, although a sleeping figure might well have an arm over the side of the bed, as I painted it. I made the arm quite unmoving by placing it parallel with the implied vertical side of the picture which is felt to be stationary. Had I wished to convey the possibility of movement, I would have handled the arm differently, perhaps placing it at an angle so it opposed the picture frame. But I wanted to make very sure the figure could not move and accented the vertical of the arm with

the repeated line of the bed-covering at its right. These two verticals rigidly support the horizontal figure, itself in turn repeated by the horizontal of the bed, in an almost architectural manner. The whole structure appears built solidly like a house and conveys a sense of immobility.

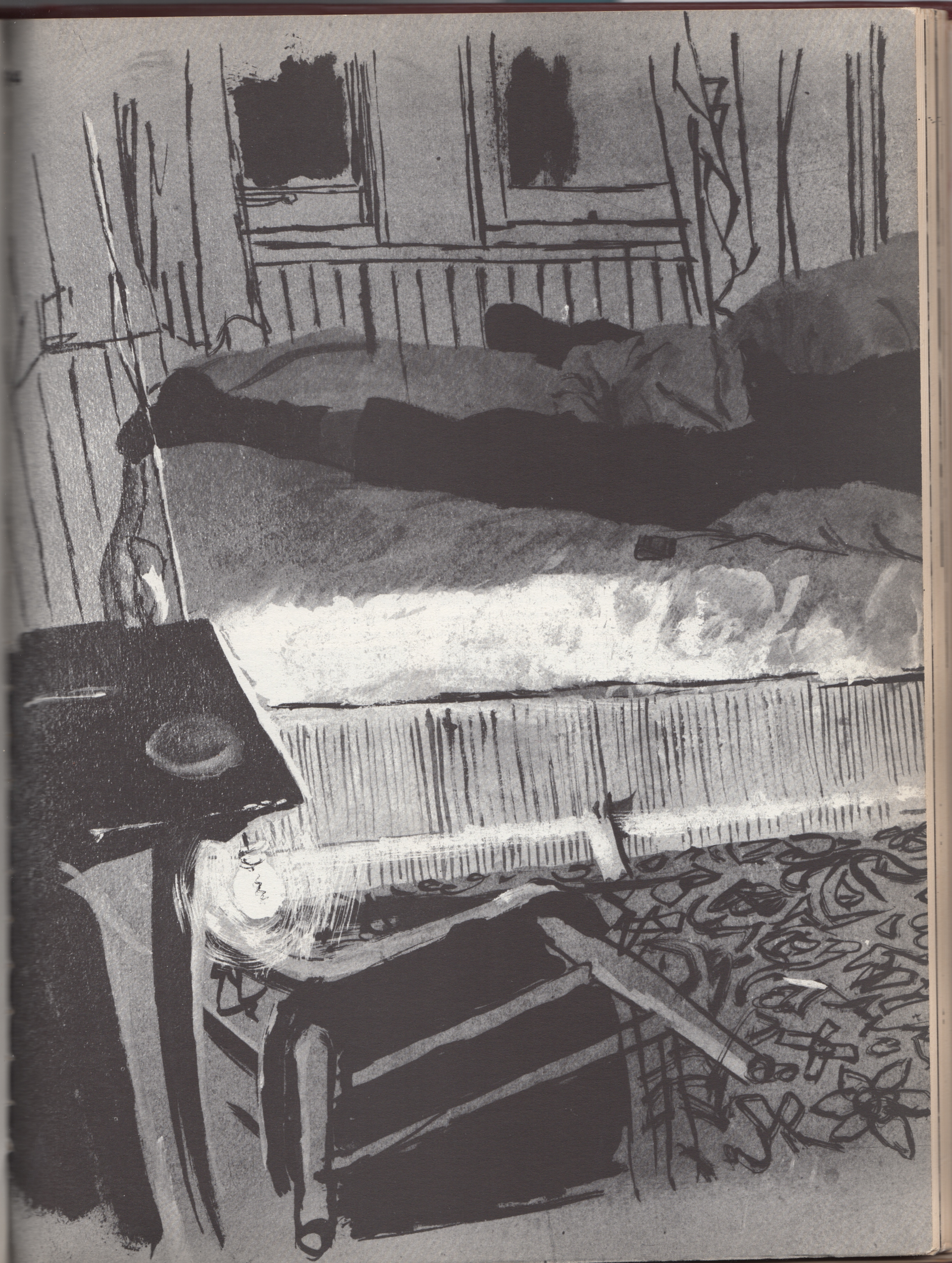
The dark of the man's trousers and suspenders states the form of the figure, while at the same time the similarity between the handling of his shirt and the bed-covering unifies the figure and the bed into a visual whole. With this stable element as the positive statement, the negative space in the background was handled in harsh, crude lines to create as nervous and brutal an effect as possible. The high eye level was exaggerated, not only to express the hero's own viewpoint as he remembered the dead man, but more important, through the use of crude, vertical



The diagram above reveals the essential structure of the painting. All else can be considered a kind of embroidery around this theme, expanding and supplementing the basic idea. Turn over the gatefold at the left, for a reproduction of the finished painting at the full size of the original.

This is a
gate fold,
lift here.









6 – Using pattern to suggest feeling

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.

lines of perspective converging toward the bottom, to increase the mood of weight and oppression further. Handling the perspective in this fashion also suggested that the whole scene might have sprung from the hero's imagination and perhaps did not actually happen at all. It might be a picture expressing the anxiety of the hero when he wakes up and finds he has been involved in something pretty grim.

Another reason for the line technique was to carry out the pattern-like quality of the trousers shape, a combination of three-dimensional and two-dimensional treatment with great stress on the rhythmic quality inherent in line technique.

This pattern quality pervades the whole surface. The man's trousers are not only trousers — they are an abstract form, which in itself is interesting. Even the little rectangular match cover by the man's knee adds something to the excitement of the shape. It might be compared, orchestrally speaking, with a single accent from the cymbal or a sudden comment by the trumpets. The background is formed with a functional line pattern. Below the bed there is a pattern-like quality in the flowers of the rug. The semi-flat value of the bed top is an area pattern.

No artist knows exactly why he does things any more than an efficient chauffeur is aware of his actions in driving a car. At the beginning of every picture, I feel as though everything I do springs from what I conceive to be objective reality: I patterned the rug in an outlined, linear, calligraphic way, whereas the bed sheet is still a flat surface and is treated as a tone pattern. This may be invention and far from the fact, but I feel that the treatment springs quite directly from what the object is.

I did not pose a model on this job. It grew from what I know or remember about drawing. Yet I spent an hour or so with a lamp beside my own bed trying to decide what the exact "jump" in value was between the light and shadow on the sheet. I needed this contact with the literal appearance of things to do the picture. The value of the bed shadow became a jumping-off place for rendering the job.

The drawing was rendered on wallboard, which is a thick piece of plaster, covered on each side by highly absorbent paper.

The liquid in the painting dries in quickly as the work progresses and allows for rapid work. A red toner in oil was applied first and, when dry, the entire drawing was indicated in India ink and a water color brush. All the lines are in ink. The values were painted in with semi-transparent casein tempera.

We are accustomed to light playing upon figures and objects from above, as witness the sun and lights within our houses. A light from another source makes the comment that this scene, unusually lighted, is unusual. I pretended the light cord had been torn from the wall during the murder and hung low beside the bed, casting its glow upward. This light source had its own obvious association. When Mephistopheles appears on the stage in the opera "Faust," he is traditionally lighted in this manner. It suggests fire and brimstone and violent passion — the mood of this picture.

I painted the figure realistically to satisfy the reader's curiosity about his appearance, but I handled the rest of the painting quite arbitrarily. The hard, crude lines in the drawing of the radiator and the wall in the background, the chair and the rug in the foreground, were meant to convey that it was a hard, crude, grubby sort of place and situation.

The blacks in the table at the left and beneath the overturned chair not only balance each other and the black of the man's trousers and suspenders; by contrast they also amplify the light. The pattern shapes are working one against the other, creating a feeling of nervous tension in themselves.

Contrary to my usual procedure, the picture was done primarily from imagination. The folds in the sheet were not copied but designed to express the general character of folds without going into detail. Of course, with another problem, and another mood to convey, I might have made these wrinkles very highly specialized and particularized. Here I liked the shadow value on the top of the sheet so much that I wanted to make sure I didn't do anything to spoil it. Almost everything else in the picture has been subordinated to this in importance, with the exception of the black pattern of the man's trousers, socks and suspenders.

Case History No. **7** — The Middle-Aged Freshman**Similar material—different moods**

While it is important to choose the right background material for an illustration, it is even more important to handle this material in such a way that it will create the kind of atmosphere and mood required by the story. Very often similar objects can be employed to produce entirely different effects. For example, in two of my recent illustrations a simple wall forms the background. This background material is treated so entirely differently in these two pictures, however, that two completely contrasting moods are established.

The first illustration in which a wall formed an important part of the setting was done for a *Post* story originally entitled "The One Life of Erwin Barrows." The principle character in this amusing tale is Father. For some time he has been bragging to his children that any mature man, regardless of educational background, can go to college and just knock off good grades

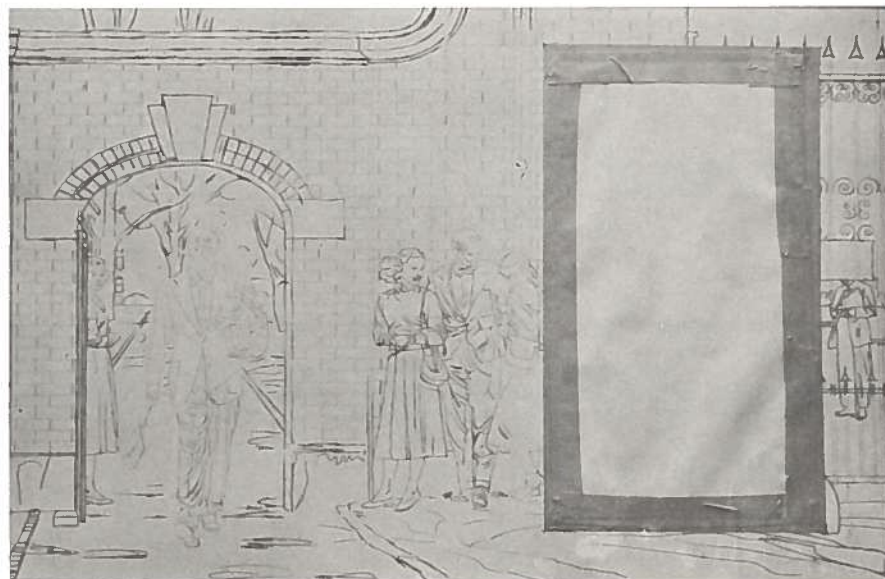
without any trouble. When crochety old Uncle Will died and left Father his fortune, the fun began; for sure enough, Father enrolled as a Freshman at the U to prove his point. The whole atmosphere of the story was light, gay, and airy. My problem in making the illustration was to set this mood, while getting across the essential story situation immediately.

The original suggestion from the *Post* editors was that I show Father surrounded by the family, announcing that he intended to get all A's. It would have been difficult to make a really successful illustration if I had used this idea. First, it contains no suggestion of the college setting which was the real background for the story. Second, there is no action; the idea is purely literary, rather than illustrative.

For this reason I suggested another approach which I thought might work out more successfully, and the *Post* accepted it. By



1 This is my first tracing paper rough for the illustration. I had made separate pencil studies of the various figures on individual pieces of tracing paper, working from the photographs. This enabled me to move the figures around on my drawing of the wall and archway, arranging my characters in different positions. I tipped the separate drawings down with Scotch tape. Now it seemed obvious that the main figure of Father was lacking in movement and didn't appear to fit in the archway as I thought he should. Furthermore, the girl at the left seemed almost to be standing in a hole — she was a little out of perspective. I decided I had to redo her. The three figures in the center were drawn together because I felt from the first that they should be composed as a group.



2 The girl was placed more naturally in the composition, and the man's figure reworked to express more clearly my basic opinion of what his personality should be. When the tissue drawing satisfied me, I traced it down on boneboard. Then I rendered the drawing with a brush, using India ink, so that the outlines would show through even after semi-opaque washes of oil color were brushed in. The area which has been masked out on the right-hand side is, of course, the type block. I scaled it carefully so that when the picture was reduced to spread size two columns of *Post* type would fit the area with the proper margins, in addition to the title and blurb. At this early stage in the painting I began to realize what a problem the wall was going to be. Just the washing-in of the over-all color made it appear solid and impenetrable, in contrast with the gay, care-free atmosphere I hoped to get in the picture. Something had to be done to make it seem less overbearing, while still retaining its character as a brick wall and its value as a prop saying "college."



3 After laying-in the background beyond the arch fairly completely to set my colors and values for the distance, I once again turned attention to the wall. The bricks would obviously have to be keyed to the distant background. I made them darker and more intense, using semi-transparent washes of oil color and turpentine because it seemed best to preserve the original structural drawing until I had decided definitely how the wall should be handled. On an impulse I began to break up the wall area with cast shadows from trees which could be presumed to be nearby. This was the answer to the problem, because it created an effect of space, light, and air, without destroying the basic texture or solidity of the wall. Since these shadows were a necessity, I decided to use them functionally. I arranged them so that they would radiate from the main figure and thus help concentrate attention on him. Incidentally, it was very important to show an area of sky above the wall over the arch. This touch of sky relieves the weight of the wall over the main figure. At the same time the curve somewhat softens the rigidity of the horizontal line along the top.



4 By this time I knew the wall was going to work out successfully. Treating it rather freely added to the informality of the picture. It was easy to paint, because I had made sure from the beginning that the basic construction was as sound as if it had been designed by a bricklayer. You can see in Step 2 how careful this preliminary work was. I began to finish the picture by working first on the main figure of Father and then going on to the girl at the left. In order to attract attention to Father I rendered his figure with the strongest contrasts of light and shadow. It was necessary to establish this range of values before I went on to paint the girl in the shadow area at the left.

showing Father in a typical college locale, surrounded by young people of college age, dressed in appropriate clothes, and carrying the right props, I could present the story situation so that the average reader would get it at a glance. This picture would illustrate not a specific line in the story, but rather the blurb which accompanied the title. By this time the story had been renamed "The Middle-aged Freshman." The blurb read, "Father figured he was as smart as any whippersnapper just out of school. He'd go to college and show them."

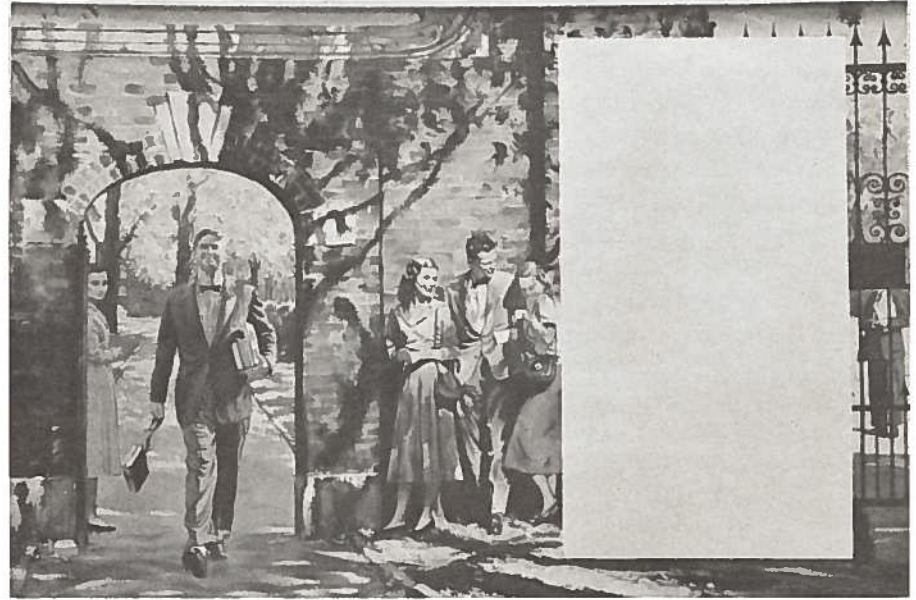
As a background I decided to use the arched gateway in Harvard Yard. When I made a rough preliminary color sketch to show the art editor what I had in mind I drew the gateway from memory. Later, after the idea was approved, I went to Cambridge and took the necessary photographs. I included my children and various other students in these photographs in order

to set the scale of the wall in relation to the figures and to establish the perspective. The actual models for the painting were posed and photographed when I returned home.

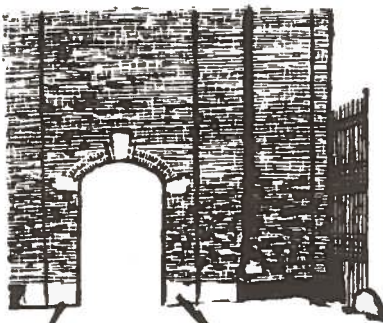
The step-by-step procedure shows the difficulty I had in capturing the right atmosphere for this picture. My wall almost ruined the whole idea, because it insisted on remaining heavy, grim, forbidding. Eventually I found the solution, and transformed it into a co-operative prop which is the major factor in setting the right mood. In contrast with this gay and carefree college wall, you will see another wall in an illustration reproduced on the facing page. This wall presents such a contrast with the wall in the college story that the importance of proper *handling* of background and prop material will be obvious immediately.



5 Here the figures are almost completed, and much more work has been put into the rendering of the wall. Now, it seemed to me, it had both qualities I wanted: solidity, and at the same time airiness. At this point I was ready to put in what I felt was a very important textural touch — the wrought-iron gate.



6 The gate added greatly to the interest of the painting by providing another texture completely in contrast with the solidity of the brick wall. At the same time it helped suggest the college atmosphere I wanted to get across. This gate is quite like the actual gate in Harvard Yard, with a few changes in design. The most important change was my placement of the lock in a different spot. This was done both to cover the face of the background figure, who might otherwise attract attention away from the main figure on the left; and also to provide a strong accent on the level at which the heads are placed. It might appear at first glance that all the figures are handled in much the same way. Actually the figure of Father has been rendered much more sharply in drawing, range of values, and color relationships than any other figure. This helps center attention on him. The value contrasts in the figure of the youth leaning against the wall are about the same as those used to depict Father. But the soft edges and slurred accents of the youth are quite different from the sharply defined, sinuous, and moving accents of the walking figure.

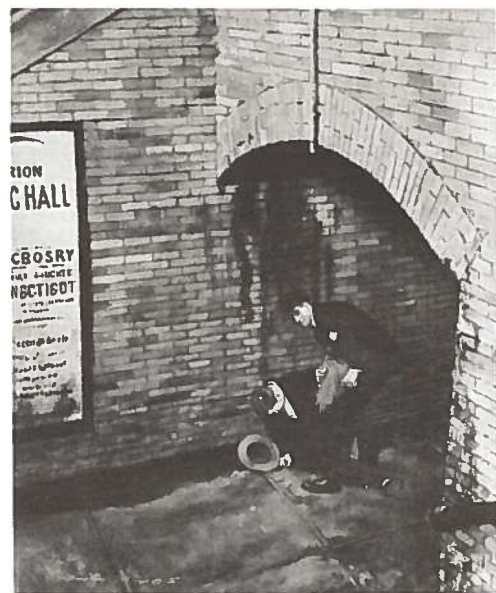


Without the patch of sky the eye assumes that the wall continues up beyond the top border indefinitely, depressing the entire mood by its feeling of weight.



The curving line at the top of the wall, which ends the wall and shows the bit of blue sky, is absolutely essential to the effect of lightness and gaiety.

The wall in this illustration is essentially the same kind of wall seen in "The Middle-aged Freshman." Here, however, it has been handled in such a way that it reinforces the mood of violence, danger, drabness, and depression. The men are trapped by these walls, and the unrelieved weight of the wall over the arch threatens them oppressively.



Letting the characters create the illustration

Each illustration assignment presents a new and different problem. Invariably, the problem itself suggests a new and different solution, and this results in a unique picture.

The solution may occasionally appear crystal clear the moment the story is read. This is exceptional. More often the best picture idea becomes apparent only after exhaustive searching. Frequently the ideal solution manages to remain hidden until the last possible moment, revealing itself in one final brain storm.

No two people would approach the creation of the picture idea in exactly the same way. Nor can the source from which the idea is to develop normally be predicted in advance. The originating spark may be a setting dimly remembered, a lucky piece of scrap, a snapshot taken years before, a glimpse of a familiar scene now suddenly recognized as appropriate, a sketch made yesterday, a long-standing wish to utilize a particular model, a chance remark overheard in passing, a mood conjured up by the story itself.

I was indebted to the story characters for creating the germinating idea of the illustration under discussion.

The story, briefly, concerned an old sea captain and his little granddaughter. They have been living together happily on an island in the West Indies. The local authorities decide the rather salty character of the captain makes him unacceptable as the guardian of the little girl, and move to separate the two. They love each other too much to accept this decision. In the early morning the old man and the little girl steal away together and set sail for another island.

The touching relationship of these two characters is the story. The background, of course, is interesting and exotic; but it is obvious that the illustration must stand or fall on its success in capturing the tender devotion between the grandfather and the little girl. This is what must be conveyed to the reader.

The problem, therefore, has dictated the approach. I must begin with the characters. After seeing how they look, move, feel, and relate themselves to each other, I can easily create an appropriate and convincing setting.

Unique characters require unique models

My first step was to select the models. They were chosen with the greatest care. I began with the little girl, since she was not so unusual as the man, and therefore more easy to cast. Of course she had to be the proper age. She was described in rather general terms as being slim and graceful, with moderately long dark hair. The daughter of a neighbor seemed perfect for the role.

The sea captain offered more of a problem. He was a unique person, and I went to a great deal of trouble to find him. I finally located the perfect individual for this job at the Lambs Club in New York City. He was a successful middle-aged actor—not a model. His fee for coming out to Westport and posing for an hour was fifty dollars, but I've always felt that the money was well spent. I could never have faked the bulk or movement of his figure without having seen him in action. Except for the fact that he had no beard, he was the author's character personified.

Fortunately his little companion in this modeling venture took an immediate liking to her big, kindly friend from New York. When she had lost all her shyness, I drove them both to the beach near my home and let them walk together. I had no pre-

conceived idea of how they were to look or move. That was up to them. My primary concern at this stage was to obtain a group of natural "walking" photographs. I counted on the mutual liking of my models to reflect the devotion of the author's characters. The pictures were shot with a Rolleiflex, at 250th of a second, in order to "freeze" the action of the figures. About twenty-four negatives were exposed.

It was only when I had the prints spread out in front of me that my real job as an artist began. Fortunately, many of the poses satisfied the human interest requirements and conveyed the tenderness between the two characters that I wanted to express. A number of these poses could have been made into acceptable pictures. My job, however, was to find the *one* pose, or the combination of poses, which could be made to combine best the two qualities of human interest and *shape interest*.

Analyzing poses for shape interest

I have always felt that it is not enough to consider each shape in a picture as an independent entity complete in itself. A single figure, considered alone, may be beautifully organized and ideally expressive. But the minute this shape is associated closely with another, the two shapes together must make a forceful composition as *one* unit, *one* shape. Unless they do, they are not a satisfactory foundation on which to build an integrated picture. Here the man-and-girl shape — the *group* shape — had to be satisfactory as a single unit so that this shape, in turn, could be related to the totality of shapes in the over-all spatial design.

It is difficult to explain why one group-shape seems "good," and another "bad." Judgments of this kind are essentially sensuous, rather than intellectual.

Perhaps the primary consideration is the sense of order present (or lacking) in the shape. We constantly seek order within the chaos of our visual experience. We cannot look out the window without unconsciously rearranging what we see. We eliminate some objects from our attention and replace others in new positions, without even realizing what we are doing. Chaos and lack of plan are uncomfortable. We invariably attempt to organize what we see into satisfying relationships.

All of us have stared at a cloud in the sky and recognized forms which possessed only the vaguest relation to the cloud itself. Because of the cloud's very formlessness, we discovered forms within it. We have an unconscious need to formalize our thoughts into optical shapes, and we understand our fleeting ideas more fully by making them visually concrete.

The opposite page contains a number of the photographs I made for this illustration. I will attempt to analyze their qualities as abstract shapes, with special consideration of repeated and similar accents and forms. These repetitions and similarities contribute greatly to *shape-interest*. They encourage us to compare forms which are somewhat similar, and, by contrast, the differences in other forms become more striking.

The ability to recognize immediately that one shape is superior to another can be developed only by constant exercise of our sensory faculties. Taste develops with experience — and decisions about *shape interest*, in the end, are largely a matter of taste.

The ideal pose combines shape interest and human interest



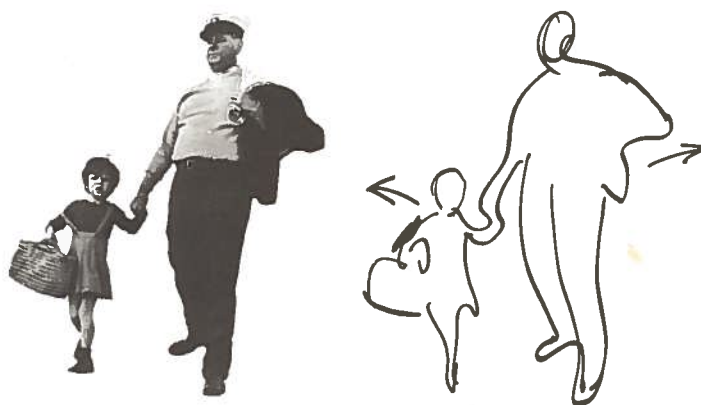
- 1** When we reduce the photograph to simple shapes, as in the sketch at the right, it is obvious why this arrangement was rejected. The figures are unrelated and the individual shapes are static. The straight lines formed by the man's legs and rifle are unrelieved by rhythm or variety.



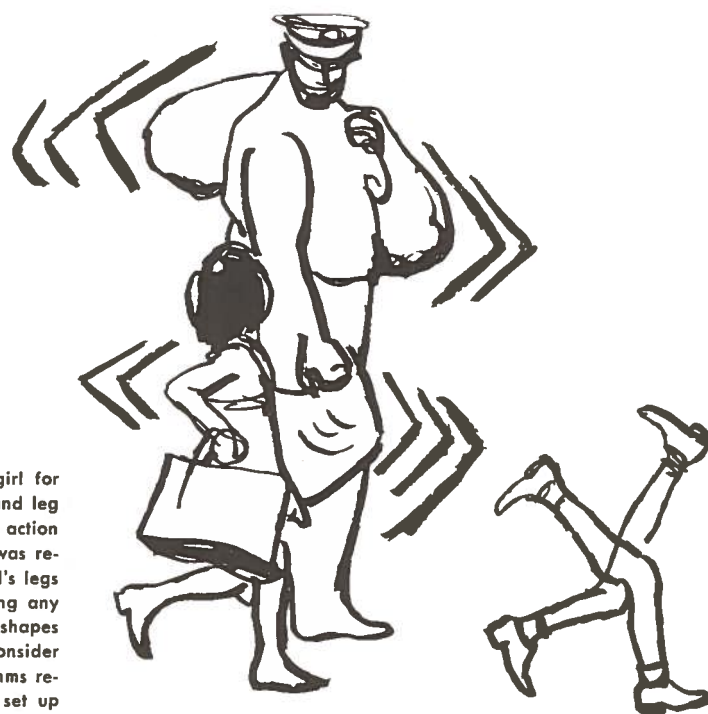
- 2** The shapes in this photo are more interesting. The long, undulating line of the man's arm is echoed by the girl's arm holding the basket. The basket itself repeats the bulk of the man's coat and duffel-bag. The leg shapes are exciting in the way they both repeat and contradict one another. This photo was not used because it seemed less ideal, shape-wise, than the one finally chosen — and also for the important reason that the girl's face is hidden. It is therefore weak in human interest.



- 3** The simple pose shown above seems so obviously planned it appears trite and dull, almost a parody of more subtle organization.

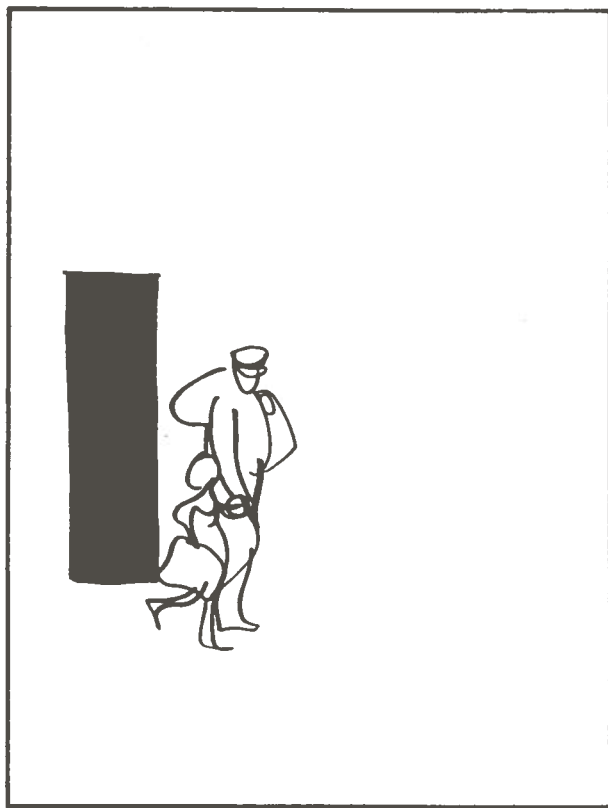


- 4** Despite the joined hands, these shapes fall away from each other and therefore imply unrelatedness.

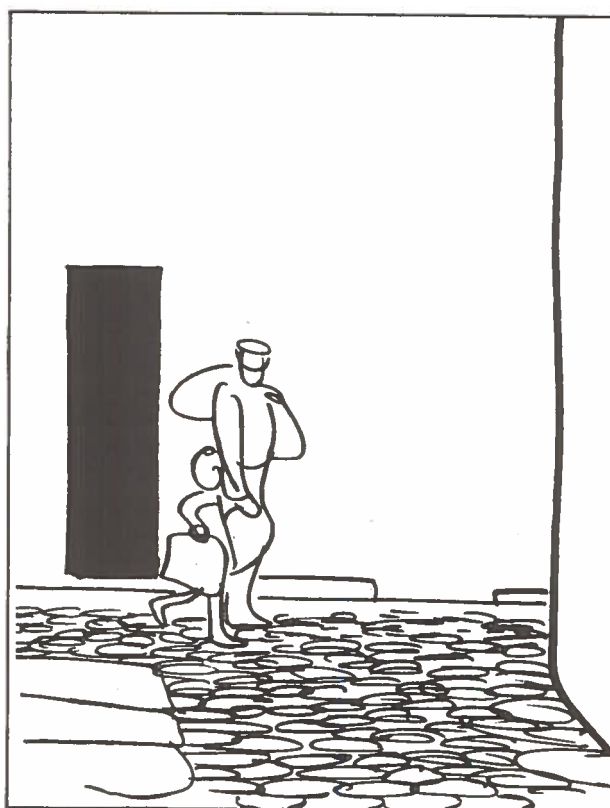


- 5** This is it. Everything I hoped for is here. The pose reveals eloquently the devotion of the little girl for her grandfather, but even more important is the beautiful, rhythmic shape. The little girl's elbow and leg repeat the form of the duffel-bag over the man's shoulder, while her chest line echoes the man's leg action and the line of his coat to set up a contrary rhythm. Considering the pose simply as a shape, I was reminded of the constantly expanding circles one sees when a pebble is tossed into a pool. The child's legs reminded me of a pinwheel, which is synonymous with motion. I very carefully avoided introducing any similar shape which might detract from this unique action. Recognizing that one shape or group of shapes is superior in interest to another is largely a matter of taste. One of the most important things to consider is the sense of order in the shape — the repetitions of similar and opposing rhythms. Similar rhythms reinforce the shape and help us compare forms which are somewhat the same; opposing rhythms set up buttressing forces which make for dramatic tension and strength.

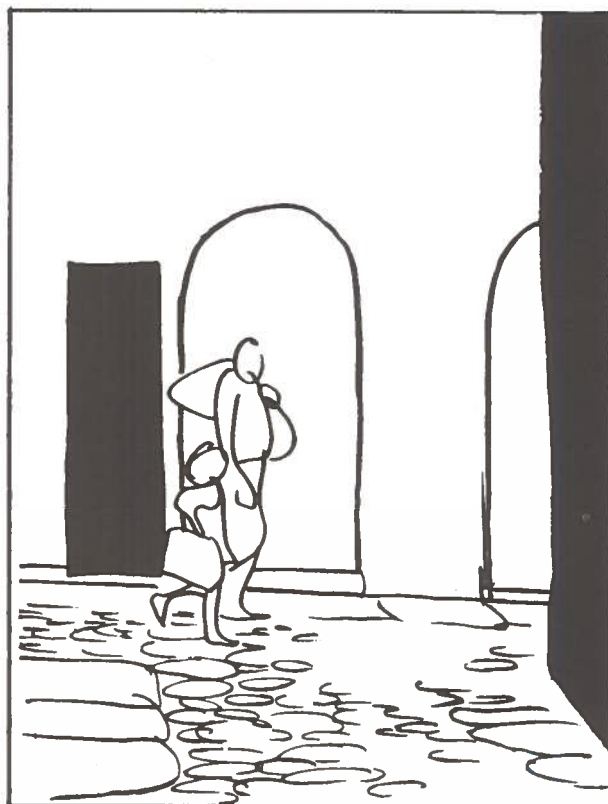
Building the picture organization



- 1 The walking pose of the figure group is an action pose, but the sense of movement is increased and made purposeful by contrasting the figures with an *entirely static* object. The rigid form of the doorway not only emphasizes the fact that these figures are moving, but suggests convincingly the picture area through which they have *already* moved. The observer's eye compares these two shapes, and the physical motion of the eye as it moves from the door to the figures suggests to the brain that there is motion *in the painting itself*. The figures are facing away from the door. We naturally assume that they will continue to move on in the same direction.



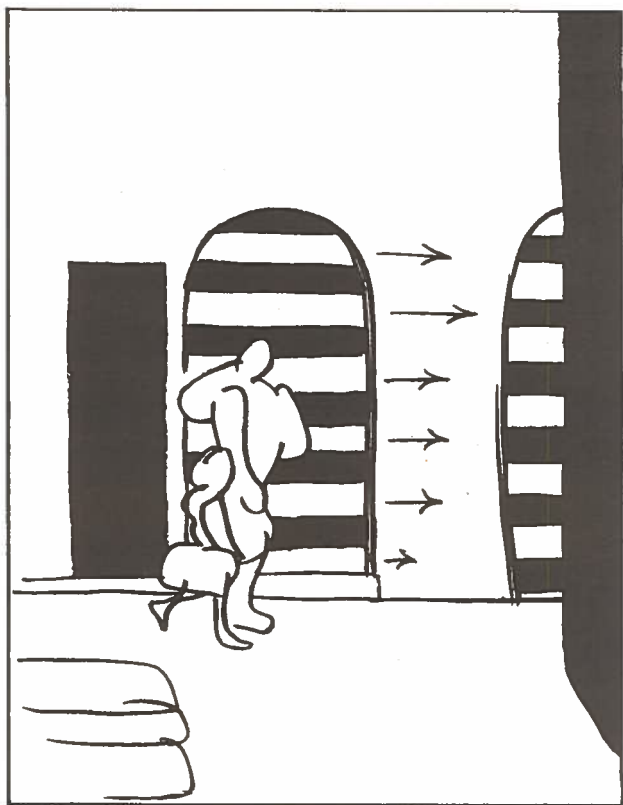
- 2 An illustration would be little more than a flat poster if it were designed as a two-dimensional pattern on the picture plane. A third dimension is added by leading the eye backward and forward *in depth* within the picture space. I have measured off the spatial depth in this sketch by means of the paving blocks. The illusion of depth is further increased by the lines of perspective in the wall at the right. In the finished picture the sense of depth will be heightened by the relationship of values.



- 3 Here two more spatial units have been added. They serve to decorate the space, and they also indicate the kind of wall past which the figures are moving. More important, since the eye leaps from object to object (as stated before) they suggest that further motion will take place in the direction toward which the figures face. Psychologically, the round-topped upward-rising shapes form an optimistic note which reflects the hopeful mood of the story situation.



- 4 This is pretty much the skeleton of the finish. At this point I realized consciously for the first time what I was attempting to do. The problem, as I now saw clearly, was to create a "closed" space which would emphasize the emotional closeness of the story characters by purely compositional means. But the closed space must be designed in such a way that the figures are potentially able to move *through and beyond* the picture space.



5 Some scrap from an old *National Geographic* provided the additional "something" this picture needed. I found that striped doors were characteristic of some island buildings in the Caribbean. Excitedly I painted them in. Now there was no mistaking the movement desired. The complete striped door behind the figure implies that the door at the right is also complete. The figures can move not only through the picture space—I have also suggested space in which they can move *beyond* and out of the picture. The stripes are, in addition, a wonderful eye-catcher.



6 Everything the artist sees should be filed away in the form of a photograph, a sketch, or a strong memory image. Several years previously I had taken a photo of this locksmith's sign in Charleston, South Carolina. Now, in this picture, it served to add one more little touch of local color to the finish. Beware the "extra touch" unless it is really needed. More pictures have been saved by leaving things out than by adding them. Be sure that what you add actually makes a positive contribution to the design.

7 The finished painting, shown on the right, was done in oil on gesso and measured $21\frac{1}{2} \times 27\frac{1}{2}$ inches. It was reduced to $10\frac{5}{8} \times 13\frac{5}{8}$ inches when printed in full color by the *Saturday Evening Post*.



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Case History No. **9** — Motive For Murder

Using an eye-catcher to stop the reader



An author's words frequently conjure up a scene which seems gripping and powerful in the reading. But when we attempt to translate it into pictorial terms, it turns out to be nothing more than a cliché, visually speaking. Then we must roll up our sleeves and find some way to make the scene interesting and dramatic. Often this requires the development of an "eye-catcher," or "stopper," which will pull the page-flipper up short and make him do a double-take.

In illustrating this story I was frankly stumped at first for a way to make the picture exciting enough to arouse the reader's interest. Finally I wrote out a description of all the characters and what they were doing. I also listed all the props in the room. Then in my studio, I played all the parts, with myself as director.

While acting out the role of the detective, I glanced into my big studio mirror. There I saw the pose I finally used. This man is a minor figure in the story. No license was taken by using this pose — the detective is gathering evidence. What makes this pose a "natural" for illustration purposes is not the literary idea, but the pictorial expression of the literary idea. One can read about a detective's activities in going over a room without being particularly intrigued. But when his activity is presented in *visual* terms, it suddenly becomes startling. What is this man doing, bending over in the middle of a room to pick up a glass with his

gloved hand? The literary idea is familiar, but the visual idea is not.

An eye-catcher, or stopper, depends for its effect on the sudden curiosity it arouses. Usually it has a touch of the incongruous and unexpected. It is intended to catch the reader off balance and give him a mild shock which will result in his suddenly concentrating all his attention on the scene presented, and cause him to ask, "What's this? What's going on here?" An eye-catcher need not be a pose. It can be a character, a prop, or even the relationship of two colors in the painting.

The only real purpose of the eye-catcher is to stop the reader. Once he is stopped, however, his eye must be led beyond the stopper and on into the story situation itself. Here I managed to accomplish this by constructing an eye-path down through the middle of the painting. Thus, almost as soon as the reader has become conscious of his curiosity about the bending figure, he has already gone on to look at the girl.

She, of course, is the real center of interest. She has been drugged, and clues have been planted around the house which make it appear that she was responsible for the murder of a man found dead in another room. The two men beyond the doorway are waiting breathlessly for the first words she speaks as she wakes up.

light door to separate
important action from
stooping figure

picture on
wall to relieve
space

head
explained
more than
in photo

coffee
table
for color
and a
comment
on girl's
pose

ash-
trays
leading
eye
toward
girl.

bottle
aiming
back
into
room

eye path

rug pattern
receding in
depth



This analysis shows the pattern of the basic positive and negative forms. There is no real difference to the eye between positive shapes, composed of three-dimensional objects, and negative shapes—the space between those objects. The shapes created by the negative space are just as dynamic and contribute just as much to the vitality of the painting as do the positive shapes, and they should therefore receive fully as much attention.



Drawing and painting from photographs is always somewhat unsatisfactory, but deadlines often make it necessary. No matter how carefully the posing is done, something in the photograph must always be changed in making the painting. In using the photo at the left, I changed the position of the detective's right leg, and turned his foot. His head, too, was more completely explained by showing part of his face. In order to give more drive to the reaching arm, I raised the other arm. The wrinkles in the reaching arm were simplified or eliminated. The wrinkles around the collar were modified to make them follow the torso shape as it recedes in perspective. All these variations were prompted by my awareness of the figure as a living volume to be expressed in space. The photo is merely a reminder of what the figure looks like, recorded in more or less flat terms.

My object in this painting was to achieve the strongest and most direct statement possible. Therefore I chose a simple triadic color scheme of three primaries — red, yellow, and blue. Red and yellow were used at an intensity which approximates the full strength of printers' inks. To keep the color scheme from becoming too raw, the blue was grayed down considerably.



Case History No. 10 — The Sniper

Character, mood and compositional design

The character around whom this *Cosmopolitan* story centers is one of the most provocative individuals ever portrayed in popular fiction. He is presumably a German or mid-European. His chief pleasure in life — his passion — is the killing of human beings for the intense, mad enjoyment it gives him. Originally a sniper for the German Army, he industriously shot Americans and their comrades. When the Allied Army overran his sector, he drove out to meet them and offered them his valuable services as a professional killer.

The Allied determination to put him in a prison camp changed when they saw a demonstration of his phenomenal skill with the rifle. Since their job was to kill Germans, they set him up in a tough little place where they expected the Germans by. He shot his buddies just as happily and efficiently as he had been killing Americans and Frenchmen and Englishmen. When he killed somebody coming along this road, where he was hid-

den among some trees, practically no change occurred in his facial expression. But it was clear that he got a very rewarding emotional bang out of what he was doing.

Making a character study of a strange, warped person like this struck me as a particular challenge. At the same time, as an illustrator, I was responsible for telling the story — as much of it as I could without giving away the plot. If I had been making this portrait for my own amusement, I would probably have been content merely to delineate his head, conveying what character I could through facial expression. Since it was necessary to include background and props, I determined to use these in such a way that they would reinforce the character of the man as portrayed in his face, through the *purely technical arrangement of structure and pattern*.

It would not be necessary to concentrate on the compositional organization to such an extent in order to satisfy both the

This is a detail of the original painting reproduced actual size.



public and the editor. What the public *sees* is the man's face. What affects them even more, though they may be unaware of it, is the underlying structure of the painting. This contributes greatly to their enjoyment of the picture, and it's much more fun for the artist to work out a pattern which seems to get over what he's trying to say than it is to do a mere diagram.

In approaching this job, I tried first to analyze the personality of this man and decide exactly what he would look like. Obviously he would be very cold-blooded, quiet, and methodical. He would be unlikely to make a sudden or impulsive move under any circumstances. When he saw his quarry coming down the road, his actions would be slow and deliberate, yet deadly. He seemed to suggest the "ectomorphic" type — a psychologically involved person with a "lean and hungry" look. I decided that his figure must be presented as very arrested and still, yet contain the suggestion of potential motion. Contrasting with the controlled tension of this man himself, the background could suggest the nervous instability of his emotions.

I made innumerable sketches in trying to find the most satisfactory arrangement for this painting. Almost any one of them could have been finished in a manner that would have been acceptable to the magazine. I did develop one sketch into the first rough shown here. But I felt it was unsuccessful and I didn't even submit it to the art director. The second rough was the idea I finally used. I haven't made a rough as complete as this more than three or four times in my life, except when I had to — when the idea had to be sold. I did so in this case because I was very much interested in this picture. I wanted to find out whether the composition would actually work out effectively.

As the diagram of the painting shows, the basic motif is a triangle set off balance on its point. The man's right side, with its straight leg moving up in a straight line to his right shoulder and the case for the telescopic sight, forms one side of the triangle. The gun forms a second side. The lower line of the triangle is established by his left leg, and this line continues through the branch of the tree. The basic triangular motif is repeated throughout the composition in various ways.

The large triangle achieves two purposes. It contains the main personality in sharp, conflicting angles and direct lines of purpose. At the same time, the unbalanced position of the triangle throws the weight of the painting to the right, forcing the observer's attention toward the spot drawing on the opposite page. The triangle holds its place in the composition, but it also suggests potential motion.

The highly nervous background contrasts strongly with the self-contained silhouette of the figure. Two different motifs make the background exciting. The first is a series of small, sharp, triangular accents, which act like impetuous staccato outbursts from the brass sections of the orchestra. The second motif consists of the lyrical curvilinear lines formed by the trees' branches and the rifle strap; these move horizontally across the composition. Both motifs contrast with the rigid, almost mechanical pattern of the figure. The horizontal curving lines are met and crossed at the right by vertical curvilinear lines. Together they form what amounts to a crosshatch of lines suggesting the conflict inherent in the situation.

These, then, were the compositional ideas which I employed

to set the mood and establish the personality of my character. It now remained to find a suitable model and collect the necessary props. The story suggested that the man would be basically Germanic in type. As it happened, the person I finally chose was a very good friend of mine who was not a German. Nor did he have any qualities which could relate him to the character in the story. His lean face and athletic figure, however, gave me a good basis from which I could develop the personality I had in mind for my painting.

As usual, I made a great many photographs — but this time not "experimental" photographs. When I'm not quite set on what I want, I explain the general situation to the models and let them improvise poses for themselves. Frequently they hit upon possibilities which probably would not have occurred to me. In this case I had already developed the exact pose I wanted. I stuck as closely to the sketch as possible. The difference between one photograph and another involved chiefly slight changes in the angle of the model's right arm and an attempt to get his bent leg to follow the straight line toward the muzzle of the gun.

I checked the man's clothes with an authority on this subject. The story character was a person of means, and the author mentioned that the man's clothes were tailored in Bond Street. Apparently at this time detachable collars were worn with shirts of this type. The shirt could have been in color, as I finally made it, or it might have had stripes. At one time I did paint in horizontal stripes, but I took them out because they added another note of busyness to a very active painting, and they had a tendency to distract attention from the face.

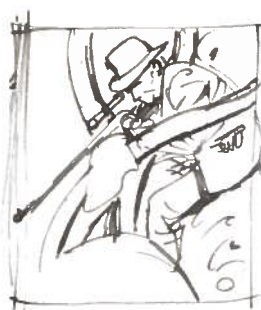
It was extremely important, of course, that the rifle be absolutely authentic. The type of rifle was described in the story. I asked a friend of mine to drop in on Abercrombie & Fitch in New York and explain the situation. They were very co-operative. They got a rifle out of stock, along with the sight, and sent it on to me. If and when you need expensive props that would otherwise be unobtainable, patronize the best stores. They are usually willing to help you out.

The finished painting was done on boneboard, a commercial gesso-covered panel, using oil paint. Contrary to my usual procedure, I laid in the drawing directly with a brush, without making a careful tissue drawing. I followed a very simple color scheme in order to keep the statement as forceful as possible. My greatest concern as I worked was to get the values exactly right. If the values are right, the forms in the picture will still carry and the structure of the painting will be clear no matter how badly the color is handled in the reproduction process.

Normally I find that three basic values — light, middle, and dark — are sufficient to express any form. Of course there are variations within these three basic values, but wherever an edge occurs I deliberately try to arrange a considerable jump between the two values, unless I actually want to lose the edge. Simple color and value schemes result in much better reproduction with high-speed engraving techniques and fast presses. Often subtle adjustments of hue and intensity are lost in magazine reproduction. But value relationships are retained fairly accurately, and if the values are right the picture will always come off successfully.



For a short time I thought this might be the best way to do the picture, using the lines of the branches and the trees and the gun barrel to suggest a spider in his web. I discarded this idea for the composition used in the finish, because I thought the latter was more forceful.



Here are some of the sketches I made before posing the model. Only when I tried the arrangement shown in the bottom sketch did I realize how much drive I could get in the composition by bending the man's leg and making it join the rifle barrel to form a triangle.





This painting won
the New York Art Directors Club Medal
for full-color editorial art.



The finished picture was painted the same size it appeared in the Post, 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 21 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches. It was done in full color, oil on gesso panel.

Case History No. 11 — The Innocent Daredevils

Unusual viewpoints should be justified

Strained or unusual perspective should never be employed unless the physical or psychological situation in the story explicitly calls for it. Occasionally we see illustrations which appear to have been painted from the vantage point of the chandelier—or a knothole in the floor. Unless the story situation justifies such a viewpoint, the use of a bizarre eye level is nothing more than a cheap technical trick. The artist is trying to make up for his lack of creative imagination by shock effect.

When a story does present a situation in which an unusual eye level can be used, however, the artist is justified in presenting the effect as powerfully as he can. In this illustration, the little girl has been playing mountain-climber with her brothers. She is marooned on a ledge in a stone quarry. The problem here is to convey to the reader a sense of the danger she faces. To do this, an unusual viewpoint is not only excusable — it is essential. An attempt to depict this situation from a normal eye level would have failed.

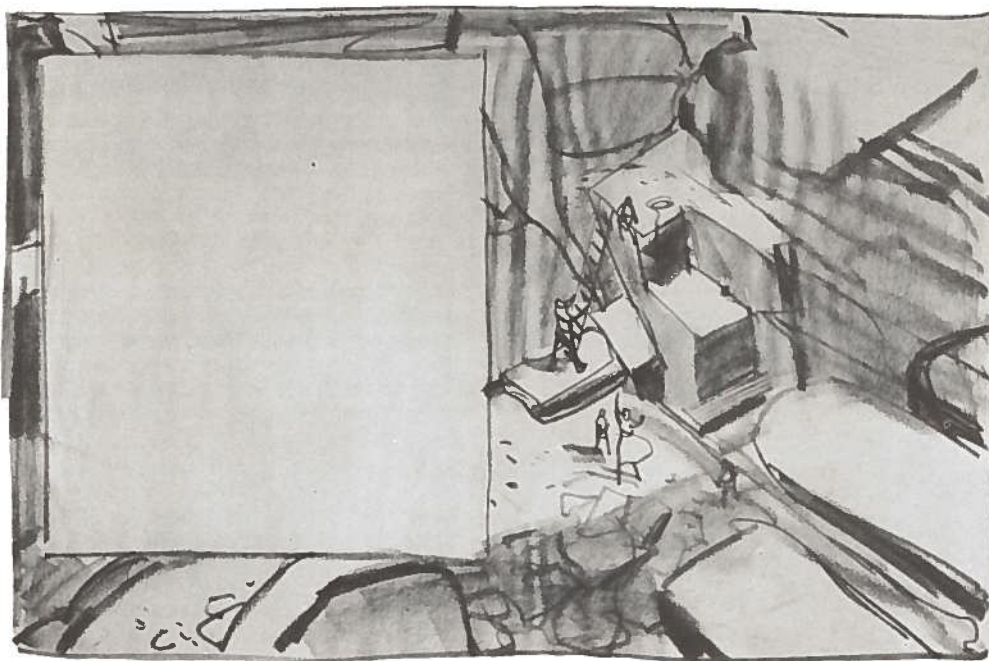


The photo of the quarry was made on a pleasure trip. We drove out of our way to see it, and, as usual, I made a number of shots for the files. The little girl was posed on the beach near my home. I asked her to pretend she was looking at something "way down," though actually what she saw was only a few inches away from her.

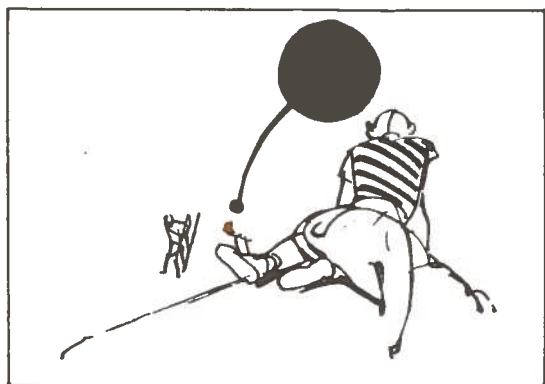




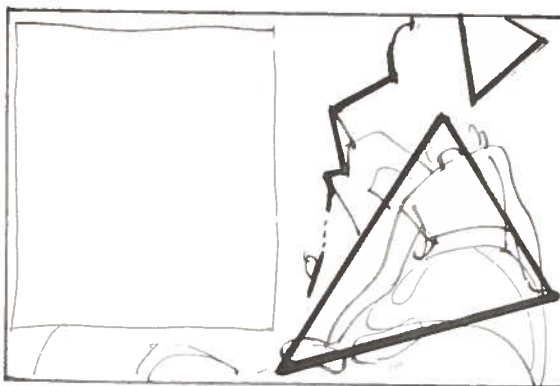
This was my first idea. Since I felt most of the *Post* readers would identify themselves with the girl's parents, I drew her from their point of view. Then I remembered that distance always seems greater when we are looking down, rather than up. We can't fall up, so even though the figure is placed at the top of the picture plane to express height, we don't feel the child's danger.



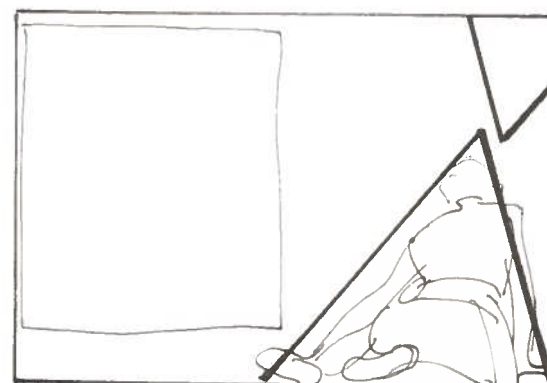
Here the viewpoint suggests the immensity of the quarry, but the figures are too incidental and trivial in scale to engage our interest. This would have been an exciting idea to realize in paint, but *people are interested in people*. Therefore this concept was discarded with regret.



I have moved the child directly in front of us. We observe through her eyes, so to speak. Thus our identification with her is unmistakable. The black balls in the diagram illustrate the degree of optical tension suggested by the disparity in scale between the figures.



Structurally speaking, three factors are designed to intensify the mood of the scene: The triangular shape of the girl and the arrow-like wedge of light above her head are both set off-balance in relation to the picture borders, thereby creating instability in the composition and evoking the sensation of falling. The third factor is the cascading mass of cliffs in the distance. The muscular reaction of the eye as it follows the cascading line registers on the mind as a falling experience, and the observer therefore senses what it would be like to tumble from that height. The final cliff at the bottom drops off into the diagonal of the ladder, which was placed to contribute another falling line to the composition.



had the picture been composed of triangles set securely on their bases, as in this structural sketch, much of the unbearable sensation of falling would have been eliminated from the painting regardless of how literally the scene was presented.

Here is the shape of the gap in the tent which I found so interesting. I have traced it from the photograph and filled it in as a solid black silhouette so that its intrinsic variety and interest may be seen more readily. I have also traced the shape of the little girl's dress. The sweep of the hemline on the right side seems to echo the lower sagging line of the tent and relates each object to the other. The dish was placed on a line directly below the little girl's head to emphasize her position.



Case History No. 12 — The Patrimony

Interesting shapes make interesting illustrations

The story for which this illustration was done concerned a magician and a little girl. Although the story itself was highly imaginative, the editor was most anxious to avoid anything that might suggest the supernatural. The editor desired "an illustration which will give the reader a clear concept of the character of the principals. They should be handled sympathetically, even though the author's description of them is a little grotesque."

Strangely enough, an author can say almost anything — and both editor and reader will accept his words without raising an eyebrow. But if the artist tries to translate the same ideas into paint, he is apt to shock everyone right out of his boots.

I searched through the story looking for a situation which would make an interesting picture and still satisfy the editor's requirements. The most promising incident occurred in a tent at a lawn party which was being given for a group of private school children. A magician has been hired to entertain them. He has been stashed away until the moment when he is to appear as the grand climax of the afternoon. However, a little girl named Constance has become friendly with him, and she is teasing him to perform a special feat of magic for her private benefit.

The situation in itself did not offer very much dramatically, so I decided I would have to make the illustration interesting in some other way. Fortunately, a local fair was in full swing when I began working on this assignment, and I hurried down to see what the background material for my picture might be like. I drew a number of sketches and made a good many photographs. But the minute I had recorded the fascinating shape

formed by the gap between the top and the side of the tent, shown in an accompanying photograph, I packed up my equipment and went home. I knew I had exactly what I wanted.

Before calling in models, I made a great many sketches to try and visualize satisfactory poses and settle in my mind what the characters must look like. One sketch of the magician, done from imagination, is reproduced here. The character I had drawn seemed familiar, and I soon realized that he resembled our local dog catcher, who is something of a celebrity in these parts and a very charming person. He was quite willing to pose. I found the little girl in a local nursery school.

In working with the models I tried first of all, of course, to capture a relationship between the little girl and the man which would have good reader appeal. At the same time, however, I was looking for individual and group shapes which would work well when related to the shape of the gap in the tent.

Assembling people and props together, photographing and sketching them, and then transferring those various elements to the painting surface so that they tell a story is a comparatively simple job. The quality that distinguishes a fine illustration, however, and makes it stand out from the general run of pictures in a magazine, is the quality of imagination and taste used in the *selection and composition of the abstract shapes* of which the picture is made. Interesting shapes help to make interesting illustrations. Almost any subject, no matter how simple or how trite, can be handled in a provocative way if the artist is sufficiently critical of the materials he builds into his picture.

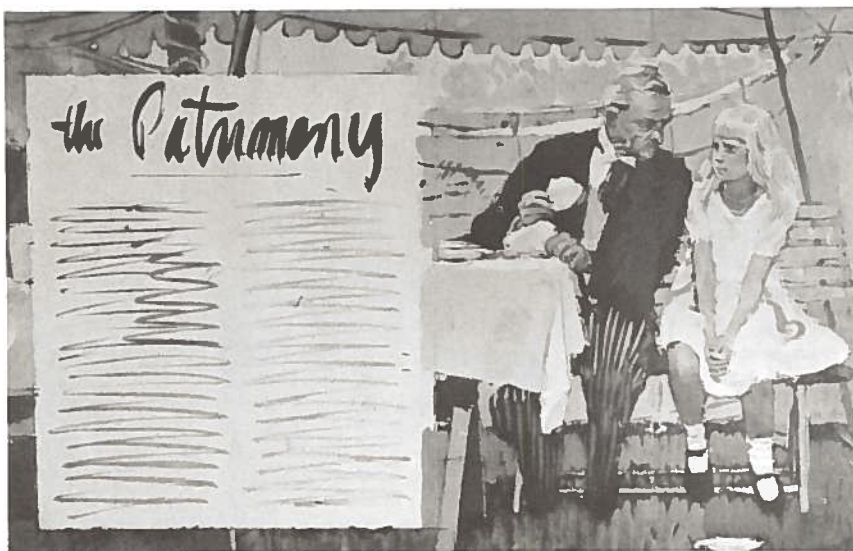


When working from photographs I always make three prints — light, normal, and dark. The light print shows the detail in the dark areas, and the relative values of the accents within those areas. The normal print shows the relative values as they appeared in the original scene. The dark print shows the detail and relative values

in the light areas. For example, it would be impossible to tell which area of the little girl's face is lightest, using only the normal or light print, but this can readily be seen in the dark print.

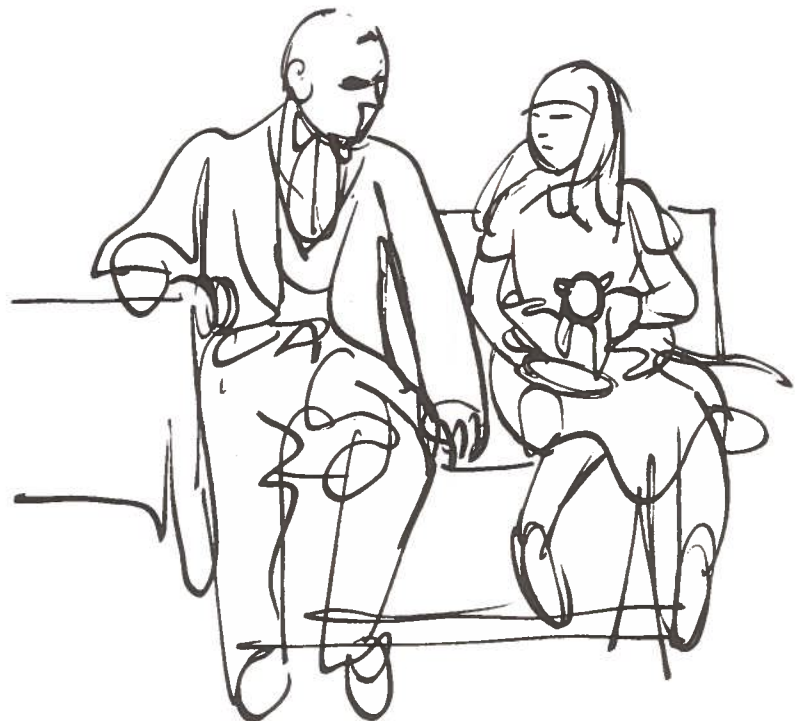
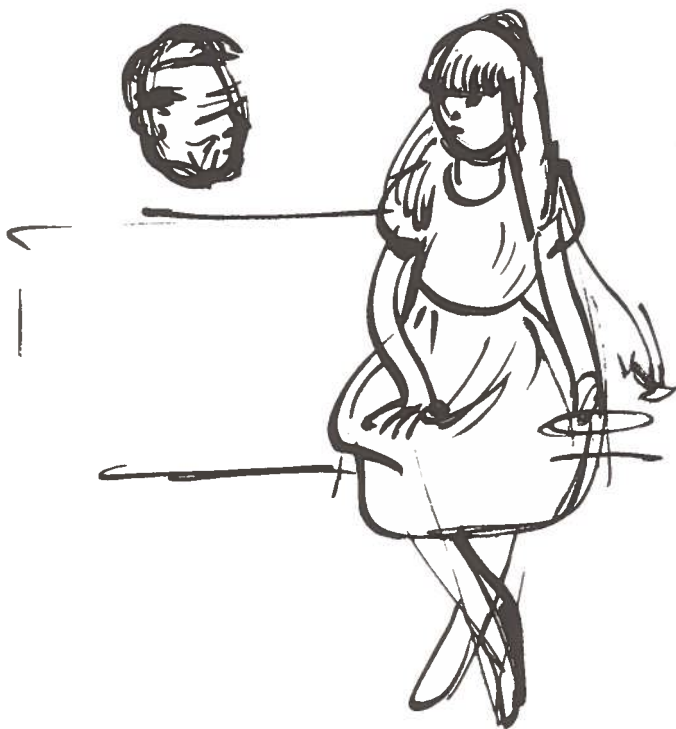


There were three reasons for including the cat in the finished composition. First he was mentioned in the story. I would not have included him arbitrarily for this reason, however, unless there were other more important considerations. Second, I believe people are interested in animals and usually look at pictures which contain them. Third — and most important — he is needed for compositional reasons. Without him the group of the man and little girl would seem isolated within the picture area. He relates them to the other shapes and tends to set them back in the picture space. He also gives me the excuse to put the plate from which he is eating on a direct line below the girl's head, thereby creating another invisible sight line to concentrate attention on her face. Finally, he helps make the picture seem less of a "set piece." Most of the other story-telling objects in the picture are complete within the picture area. The fact that he is incomplete therefore adds a needed touch of informality.



The first color rough was done actual page size, oil on paper. I carried it to a rather finished state — not to show the art director, since that was unnecessary on this assignment — but to try and set all the elements very definitely for my own information when it came to painting the finish.

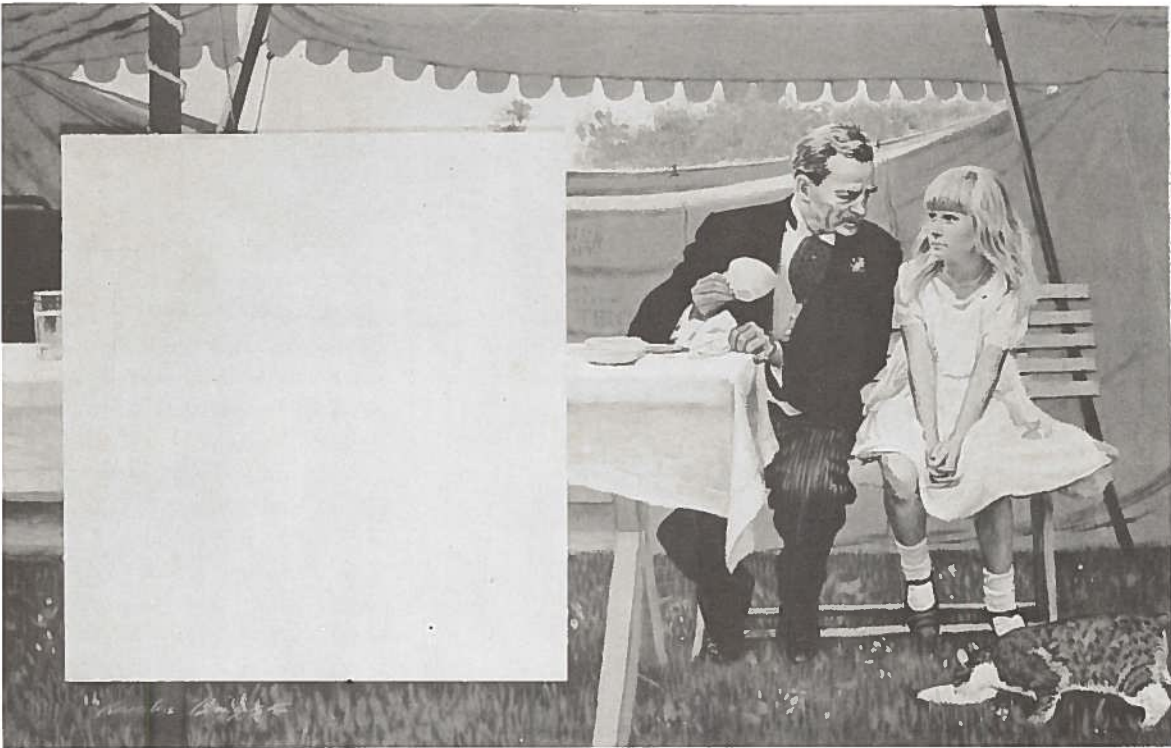
Turn the page for some of the drawings I made before posing and photographing the models.



It's always a good idea to work out basic compositional problems in sketches before calling in the models. Then if your models are not particularly imaginative, or are ill at ease with each other, you will have the situation well enough settled in your own mind so that you can tell them what to do. In these drawings I tried to establish the relation between the two figures, and the placement of the little girl's plate. By the time I made the sketch at the lower left I had pretty well decided on the arrangement of table, figures, and bench. It seemed clear that the bench ought to show a bit beyond the little girl to explain itself. The plate in the sketch at the lower right is not in the same position as in the finish, but this is a move in the right direction. These drawings gave the models a better idea of the poses I wanted than any amount of oral description could have done.



This is how I imagined the magician might look, from the description in the story text. The character I had drawn seemed vaguely familiar and then I realized he was a dead ringer for our local dog catcher. It helps to have a clear picture of your character in mind before you begin searching for models — then you will be more influenced by your conception of what the characters *should* look like than by the actual models in front of you, who often are not exactly what the author described.

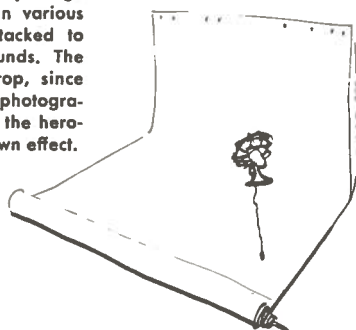


This is the finished illustration, done in oil on gesso the same size as the reproduction—13 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 21 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches. It was printed in full color in the *Saturday Evening Post*. Working "same size" in this instance had definite advantages — there was no guessing about how various pattern details, such as the satchel, the amount of red on the tent post, etc., would look in relation to the text block.

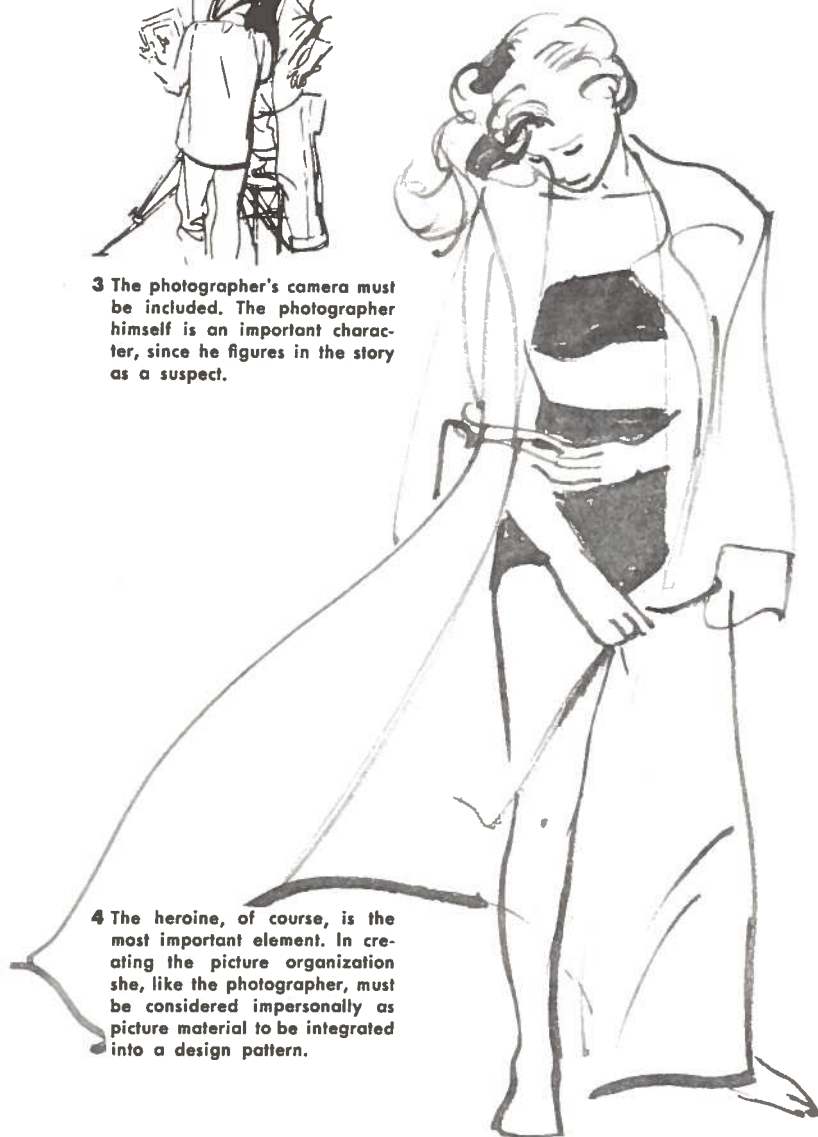


1 Here is the interior of the photographer's studio, with window and skylight. Two ladders of different sizes and a complicated-looking tripod make interesting prop material.

2 I remembered that photographers frequently employ large rolls of tough paper in various colors. This may be tacked to the wall for backgrounds. The fan is an essential prop, since the author said the photographer used one to blow the heroine's hair for a windblown effect.



3 The photographer's camera must be included. The photographer himself is an important character, since he figures in the story as a suspect.



4 The heroine, of course, is the most important element. In creating the picture organization she, like the photographer, must be considered impersonally as picture material to be integrated into a design pattern.

Case History No. 13 — Murder for Millions

The serial

Magazine serials are usually divided into three to eight installments. The average number is six. In order to get the reader interested, the opening installment is expected to start off with a bang, and the succeeding installments must be illustrated in such a way as to maintain a constant mood of tension. These rules apply despite the limitations of the story situation and action, or lack of it, from installment to installment.

Unfortunately, starting off the serial with a bang is often a problem. Most of the serials I've illustrated offer three pages in full color for the first installment. This would be an illustrator's dream come true — if he had anything to illustrate! Usually the opening installment does not offer an adequate literary situation. The author is concerned only with setting the mood and introducing the characters. On the other hand, during succeeding installments when provocative situations develop I find myself working in restricted space with two colors, and placed well back in the editorial section competing with the ads.

One of the unwritten laws of serial illustration is that the heroine must be introduced in the first installment. Imagine my consternation when I discovered that the only scene in which the heroine appeared during the first installment of "Murder for Millions" took place in a photographer's studio. Nothing could have appeared more unlikely to produce an excuse for a good picture than such a scene.

Holding firmly in mind my thesis that a successful picture grows naturally and inevitably from the subject matter, I sat down and made a list of all the equipment I had noticed in the studio of a photographer friend. I then juggled this material around in a series of rough sketches until I arrived at a composition which seemed to have interesting possibilities.

Organizing the picture world

William Blake spoke of seeing the world "in a grain of sand." It's pretty much this same idea I'm trying to express when I speak of the picture, within the borders of its perimeter, as enclosing the "complete world."

The picture is a complete world in the sense that the picture is a world unto itself, subject to its own laws and having its own organization. It exists independently of anything else in the three-dimensional world around us. In this picture world we can create a unity and organization to please ourselves — a more satisfying expression of reality than we find in the chaos of the workaday world in which we live. If we are to do this we must have a plan; we must make a design. Everything represented within the picture space must be related to everything else within the picture space.

In illustrating this scene of the girl in the photographer's studio, I was forced back upon my imagination as an artist in order to create a pictorial world which would be satisfactory purely because of its design and arrangement rather than depending for its effect on "what is happening." In the literary situation, nothing was "happening." I could not have created an action picture if I had wanted to.

I was indebted to the literary situation, however, for providing the material which was to go into the picture. And, as so often happens, the pictorial idea stemmed naturally from this

material. In this case I found the basic "theme" for my picture in the triangular shape of the tripod. The whole picture is constructed on this triangular motif.

Figure 1 shows the underlying structure of the composition, analyzed from this point of view. The picture is seen to be an arrangement of triangular shapes, all of which lead up to the point of interest — the heroine. These triangles are varied in different ways. Some of them have wider bases than others, some have sharper points. All of them are linear, two-dimensional patterns, with the exception of the triangle formed by the camera. This is felt to be a three-dimensional pyramid.

The use of a single theme, if concentrated upon to the extent shown in Figure 1 on Page 118 (and there are many more repetitions of triangles in the picture than the diagram shows), has a tendency to become monotonous. It is therefore necessary to introduce a contrasting theme as a counterpoint to it. Figure 2 shows how the upper portion of the man's figure and the girl's figure are handled as very soft, rounded patterns. These soft forms are more powerful than the heavy, dark, triangular forms in the picture because they are fully expressed. They are treated as three dimensional objects completely realized in volume, color, and texture, whereas the triangles are handled essentially as two-dimensional linear elements.

One of the most important factors in the picture is the long,

wriggling line of the light cord leading from the bottom left center of the picture up to the fan. This is rather a soft line and should be considered one of the softer forms, but it is handled in a very tense, nervous way. Besides forming a line of entry to the painting, it is actually the only moving element in the entire composition. Without it the picture would seem rather relaxed and casual. With it, the whole scene gains a nervous tension appropriate to the serial being illustrated.

There is another important factor which serves very definite functional purposes, and that is the use of color. The background is done in warm, neutral tones. Brighter colors are arranged in a definite pattern to support and emphasize the compositional planning diagrammed in Figures 1 and 2. Figure 3 indicates this color pattern. The steps of the ladder on which the photographer is standing and of the ladder leading up to the girl are red. On the way up they pass the fan, which is green (complementary to the red), and finally gain the height of the girl's bathing suit. The suit is a brilliant Prussian blue, a color analagous to the green and somewhat complementary to the red. The color pattern finds its climax in the red mouth of the girl. Although her lips are the smallest touch of red in the entire picture, this is the apex of the color pattern; the whole color composition is designed to concentrate attention at this point.



1 My first doodle—pure "cheesecake."



2 More "cheesecake," without enough prop material to suggest the photographer's studio.



3 Too tricky an angle; the figures don't explain themselves.



4 All angular lines — there are no fluid shapes to suggest the femininity of the heroine, and there is no movement in the composition.



5 Much better — but the girl's figure is too rigid, and the man's figure is dominated by the camera.



6 Awkward — and vulgar!



7 No relationship between the separate elements.



8 Cluttered and crowded; it looks like a diagram in which there's too much anxiety to explain everything.



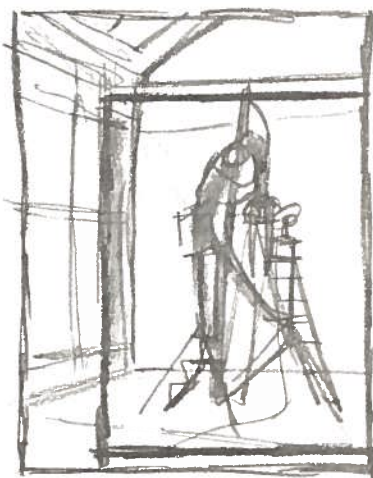
9 Too much photographer, too little model.



10 No variety; everything is centered as though this were a monument.



11 Not too bad; this could have been developed into as good a picture as the finish, proving there is no one way.



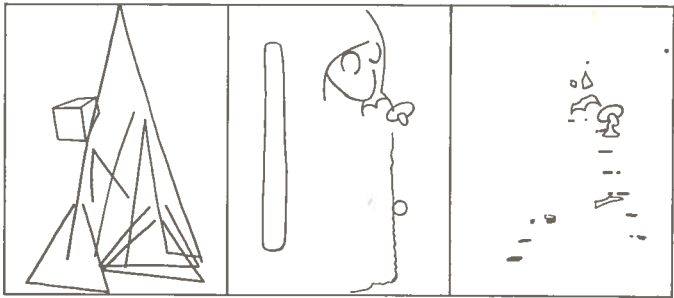
12 Almost the final arrangement.

The group of the photographer, model, ladders, etc., is almost the same as in the previous sketch. However, in Figure 11 the chair and screen at the right created a complication which made that composition more interesting. When the chair and screen were omitted, it was only necessary to enrich the main group. I did this by placing the photographer's right leg on a diagonal line, thus creating a kind of syncopation in the basic triangular composition. I cropped my sketch to move close to the figures. With this rough as a guide, I posed models in the actual studio I had in mind, and photographed them using natural, diffused daylight from the studio window.



The finished painting was done reproduction size in oil on gesso. The use of dryer with the pigment tended to give the paint a delicate, luminous quality, which was just what I wanted. Because this painting was intended to glorify the heroine, I kept the handling delicate and minimized brush strokes. As a result the painting has a feminine quality of softness which reflects her personality.

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See Page 117



Robert Barry P.S.

All the essentials – but only the essentials

This serial was being illustrated for the *Saturday Evening Post*. It was therefore necessary to follow their rather rigid specifications. For some years the *Post* has preferred to think of its pages as the pages of a book, and it follows a definite plan which has changed very little over a period of time.

In the *Post* the new serial is presented as the first story in the magazine. On the opening page, which is always a right-hand page across from an advertisement, no more than 55 per cent is allowed for illustration purposes. The remaining space is devoted to the blurb, the serial title, and the opening paragraphs of the story. The illustration may be given the effect of a full-page picture with a section cut out for the text; or it may be shaped vertically, occupying one and one-half to two columns; or it can be presented as a conventional rectangular picture run across the top or bottom part of the page.

Since my picture of the heroine in the photographer's studio was designed to occupy a full page, it could not serve as the picture for the opening page of the serial. Furthermore, the subject would hardly have been suitable, since the serial was a murder mystery. I therefore set about designing a picture which I hoped would set the mood of the story as a whole by showing the murder of one of the principal characters.

The setting in which the murder took place was a bedroom. However, the description was so general that many different kinds of bedrooms could have been shown. In contrast with the previous situation set in the photographer's studio, this scene suggested so many possibilities that I found it difficult to settle on which exactly would be best.

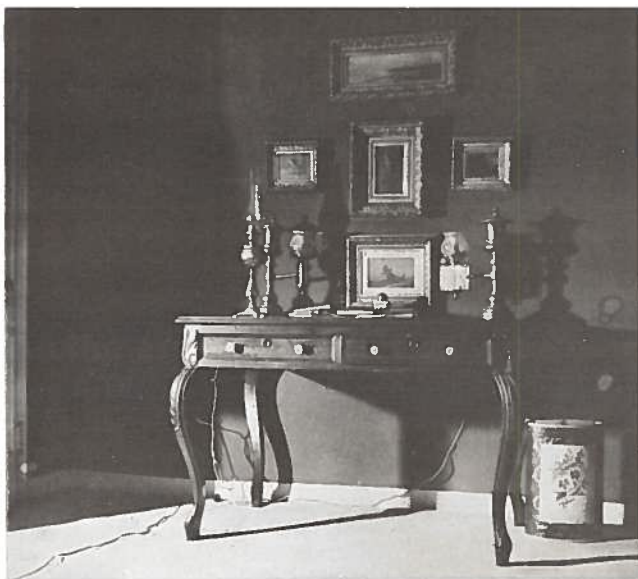
Finally, at the home of a friend, I found such interesting prop material that I took the necessary photographs and immediately got down to work in great excitement. I had already got well into the painting of the picture before I realized that something was terribly wrong. I was having fun painting the props, but these incidentals had become so important in the picture that the story was completely lost. The man who is strangling the

figure on the bed is way over on the right, without anything in the composition to lead the eye to him. As a consequence the picture on the wall, the shape of the bed, and the interior of the room become the story, rather than the action of the man's figure and what it means.

From this experience – and others like it – this conclusion could be drawn: Although the material for our illustration is all around us, it is necessary to exercise a great deal of selectivity in choosing and using that material. Furthermore, while the illustration should contain all the material which is essential to get the story across quickly and clearly, anything which confuses the story or fails to explain it should be eliminated. The picture should have *all* the essentials – but *only* the essentials.

When I realized what the trouble with this picture was, I scrapped it and began over again. I salvaged a couple of ideas from this first attempt, however. One idea was to show the murderer from the back, since his identity had to be hidden from the reader until later installments. The second idea was to use the nervous, excited line of the blanket border as the only touch of red in the painting. It would serve as a contrast with the more subdued colors, and act as a comment on the tragedy.

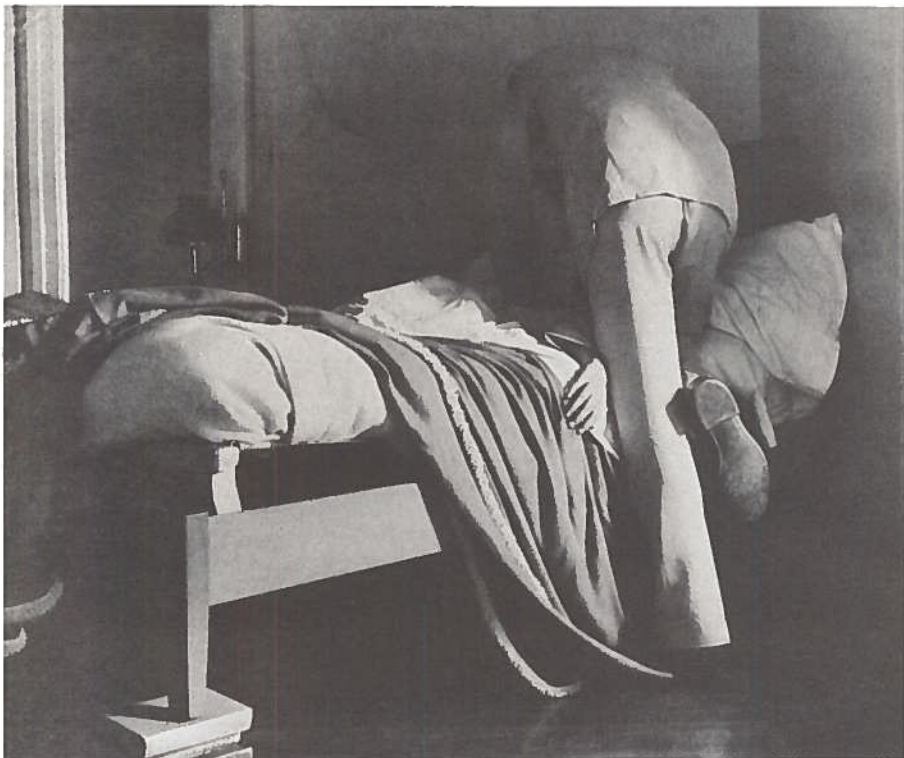
Without making a further rough, but remembering how much more simply the picture should be composed, I posed a model for the photograph shown on the next page. If you check the photo against the finished painting you will see that I made a few changes. The principle difference is that I brought the hand further onto the bed and suggested a tension in the pose of the fingers which doesn't exist in the photograph. I also arranged the bedclothes in a kind of swirl to create still more sense of tension and excitement. This area surrounding the hand contains the strongest value contrast in the whole picture. Linear and tonal excitement concentrate at this point; the murdered man's hand expresses the violence of the situation as no other treatment could have done quite as effectively.



This fascinating assembly of props, which I found in a friend's home, intrigued me so much that I decided to build the painting around it. I dug up a curious old bedstead and several lamps to complete the setting.



I had carried the painting well along toward the finish before I realized that I was painting the setting instead of the story. The only visible figure, the murderer, is pulled too far over on the right. What he is doing is not clear; his victim is so obscured that the page-flipper would hardly realize what is taking place here. Because I wanted to get more detail in the props, I made this painting twice reproduction size. That was another mistake, since my other pictures for this installment were painted reproduction size. It is best to do all the illustrations for one issue on the same relative scale.



I threw out my first sketch and posed the figure of the murderer over again. This time I disregarded props entirely and concentrated on the action. From the first attempt I retained the idea of showing the murderer from the back, and held on to the idea of using the blanket with the bright red border. The brilliant red color and busy quality of this border served as a kind of symbolic comment on the action.



To complete the illustration assignment for the first installment I needed a spot. I chose to show a suspected character escaping from the house. His gesture and action had to be clear to the reader immediately. Some months before I had made a sketch of an interesting little building near my home, and I incorporated this as a functional part of the picture. The decorative point rising from the building would catch the reader's eye. I painted it a bright, warm color to attract attention, and placed the important character directly beneath it so that the eye would naturally fall down from the point of the building to the figure below. This little spot was also done actual reproduction size in oil on gesso, like the two paintings just discussed. Naturally I dislike working this small in oil, but I wanted to keep the spot in character with the other paintings. If I had done it much larger for reduction by the engraver it might have seemed quite different stylistically.



The finished painting is done as economically as possible. There are no extraneous props cluttering up the scene. Color, line, and light are all devoted to telling the story with the greatest possible strength and clarity. This scene and the picture of the girl in the photographer's studio were both done actual reproduction size in oil on gesso. The latter painting was handled softly and delicately to suggest the femininity of the girl. This painting was done much more broadly, with crude, strong brush strokes, to help express the violence of the action.



Don't be too obvious

In a serial of eight installments, the second, third, fourth and fifth installments are usually done in two colors — black-and-white, plus a second color which, in the case of the *Post*, may be chosen by the illustrator. Occasionally last minute difficulties in the editorial office result in the use of a different color from the one the artist chose. When this happens, it can be a blow; but fortunately it happens rarely.

Spacewise, the artist is permitted to utilize at most approximately 55 percent of two pages for illustration in these four installments. He can distribute this space as he pleases, making one full-page picture, or a half-page picture running across two pages, or two separate pictures on different pages. Occasionally he is permitted more space, but normally this restriction holds.

For the second installment of this serial I planned two pictures. One covered the upper part of the left-hand page, the other was a spot illustration running across the bottom of the right-hand page.

The left-hand picture was a scene in an artist's studio. It is interesting chiefly for the handling of the composition which is based on a circular structure. Notice how the eye enters from the lower left-hand corner, attracted to that spot by the busy-ness and confusion of the artist's materials there. Then it is led logically upward along the lighted edges of the canvases the girl is holding, arriving at her shoulder and proceeding to her head.

It then follows her startled glance to the almost fully concealed figure behind the canvas on the easel, and continues over to the two small heads set on the background window sill. Finally it follows down to the books and the line of the chair to its original starting point.

A secondary organizational line begins at the upper left with the sketches and falls in the form of an arc down to a point near the girl's knees. It continues along the chair arm and rises again toward the heads and books at the upper right of the painting. Compositional arrangements of this type need not be artificial or forced; usually they result from a sensitivity as to the clearest and most practical way to place the various objects within the painting. Handled properly, careful construction of this type results in a structure as solid and convincing as a building. Nothing can be moved, removed or replaced, because it is felt to have its essential part in the picture pattern.



One interesting point concerns the use of light. Here the greatest contrast and intensity of light is found on the girl's shoulder. Obviously, there is no particular reason to highlight this area for its own sake; her head constitutes the center of interest. The strong light, by being placed *near* the head rather than directly on it, avoids the obvious "here-it-is" comment which a sharp lighting of her head would make. This practice of placing the strongest light, the sharpest accent, the busiest material *near* but not *on* the center of interest makes for a more subtle effect and still attracts the eye to the area the artist wishes to emphasize.

Another subtlety, which is illustrated a number of times in this course, involves hiding the *real* center of interest and thereby arousing the reader's curiosity. In this case, the concealed figure behind the painting on the easel is the important character in the painting. Who is he? What is he doing there? What does he look like? Does the girl know who he is? The more effectively the artist can raise questions like these in the reader's mind and the more curiosity he can create, the more effective his editorial illustration will be.

Here the whole picture has been designed to take the reader's eye immediately to this mysterious figure. The canvases the girl holds, the line of her arms, the accented form of her shoulder, the twist of her head, all lead to the hidden head of the concealed man. Attention is further drawn to this area by the squares of the window, which makes this portion of the painting busier than the surrounding areas. Even the handle of the easel ratchet points toward the unseen face.

One further little trick, which I have used a number of times,

is the technique of "framing" an important figure by some compositional means. Here the girl's head attracts attention immediately because it is "framed" in the square of canvas on the easel just as effectively as if I had cut out an actual three-dimensional frame and pasted it on the surface of the painting. The spot illustration which ran across the bottom of the right-hand page was intended to create tension and excitement. At the same time, it established the existence of a maid who is killed by the murderer later on in the story.

The scene is viewed from above. Normally there would be little excuse to handle the subject from this viewpoint, but in this case the murderer was looking at her from the same spot where the reader stands as he looks at the picture — the landing on a stairway above the hall through which the girl is running.

The girl is supposed to appear frightened. I tried to get over this idea by placing the light so that she would be running toward the dark, which is frightening to most of us. The diagram illustrates how nervous lines were used throughout the painting. This is particularly apparent in the edges of the shadows cast on the wall by the girl's figure and the little coach and horses. Excitement is suggested by the sharp little points of the candelabra. The nervous contradiction of the rug pattern across which the girl runs adds to this.

A kind of shock pattern is suggested in the vertical lines of the chair upholstery, almost as though the girl were pushing the air along ahead of her. The flowing lines in her clothing and the long horizontal line in the rug contribute to the sense of movement. The fact that everything in the picture seems to be falling toward the left reinforces the feeling of flight and fear.



Tilting the picture to heighten the mood

When I came to the third installment of this serial the main action provided little illustrative material. I therefore chose a secondary incident which actually had little consequence in the development of the story but could be made interesting. The heroine is looking for some papers in the attic, when something suddenly knocks her unconscious. The reader knows by this time that her husband is the murderer, but perhaps he has an accomplice. It turns out, shortly afterwards, that the file shown in the picture has fallen on her head, and no one is actually to blame. For the moment, however, it can be made to appear that dire deeds are being done.

Nothing else in this installment could have been used to suggest that it would pay the reader to begin wading through the story so late in the game. However, it is the illustrator's business to sell the serial, even if he has to go a bit out of his way to do it. I therefore considered the best means to play up this scene so as to build up as great a mood of tension as possible.

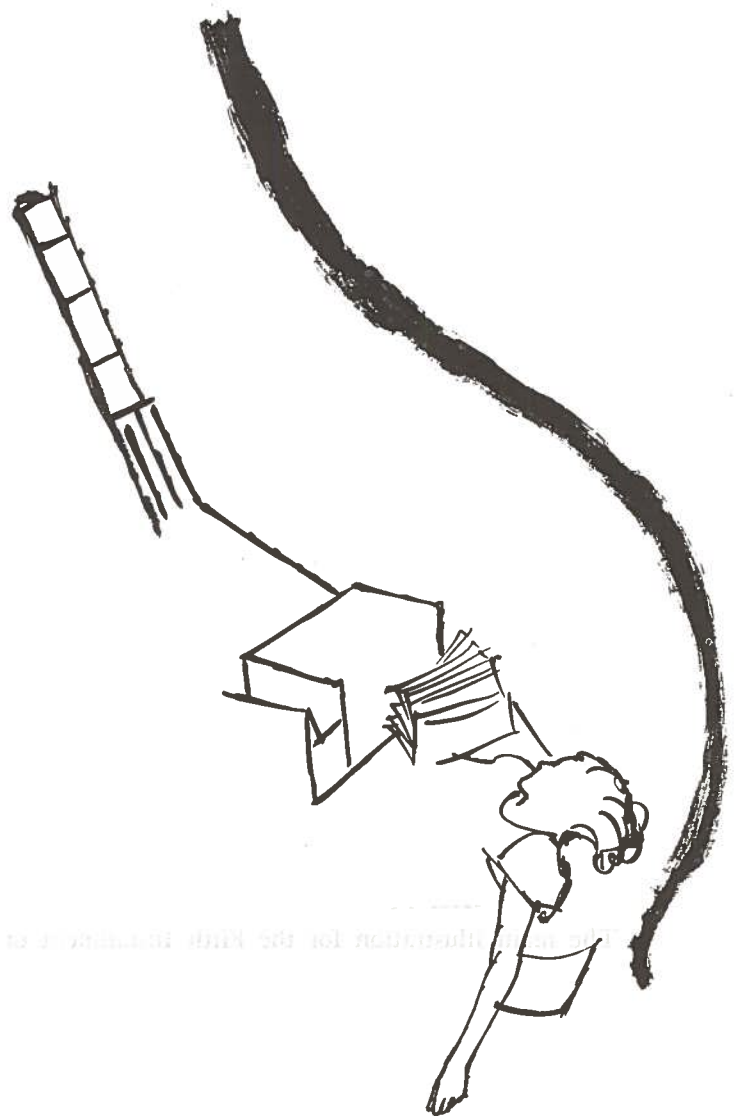
If this incident had been presented in a conventional manner, it would simply be a scene in an attic with a girl lying asleep or unconscious on the stairs. That is a straight visual presentation of the situation, and, as such, it is not terribly interesting.

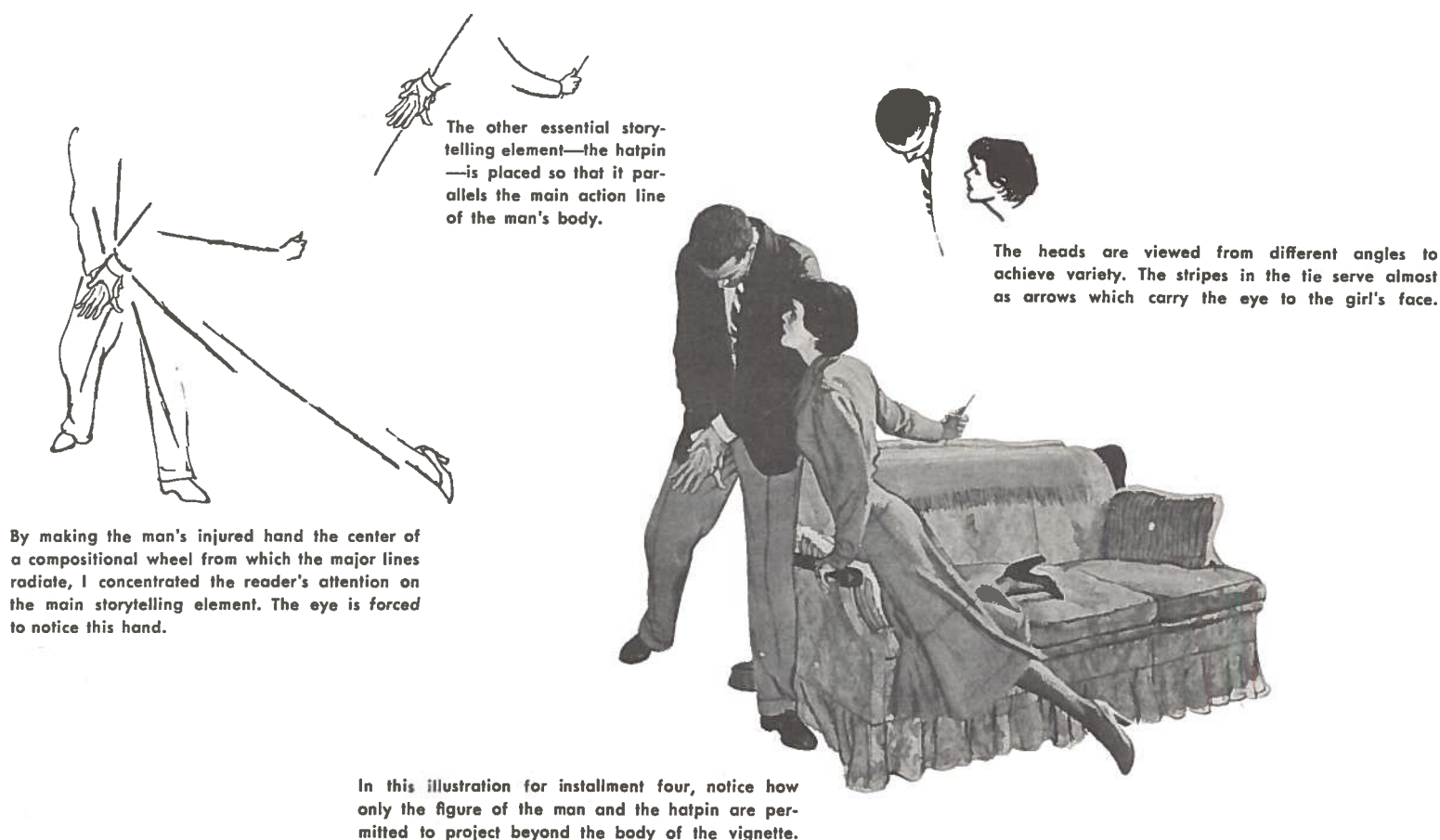
It occurred to me that tilting the picture would make it an entirely different illustration. Now I am presenting not only the scene itself, but making psychological comment on the situation. The reader easily identifies himself with the unconscious person, and gains some sense of what she is feeling — the sense of falling, the sensation of "everything suddenly going around," the sudden shock of being knocked off balance.

The mere visual presentation would have been as obvious and uninteresting as the relation of two primary colors. When the composition is tilted on its side, the effect is almost like moving around the color wheel to two more subtle primaries. The same relationship between objects is maintained, but the mood is different. Cropping a picture of a normal everyday scene in this way would be nothing more than a trick designed to attract attention. In this case I felt that it had a legitimate excuse, and actually heightened the effectiveness of the illustration by helping the reader feel the mood more forcefully.

The composition is made up mainly of horizontals and verticals, to increase the shock of seeing a four-square world off balance. Contrasting with this geometric pattern, however, is the curtain at the right. The very shape and movement of the curtain is almost like a solitary scream. The important props and, in fact, the body of the heroine, echo this line of the curtain—although I was unaware of this fact while painting the picture. The analysis of the painting makes this arrangement clear.

At first glance the reader might assume that the house itself is being tilted in a hurricane, or that the room is off balance, like a room in a "house of horrors." The hanging cloth at the left door jam assures him, however, that the room itself is perfectly vertical. The tilt is within the *feeling* of the situation, rather than part of the physical aspect.





Relating the parts to the whole

This illustration for installment four, depicting an incident in which the girl has just stuck the man with a hatpin, contains only three large elements: the girl, the man, and the couch. To make the picture as dramatic as possible I handled the scene as a vignette. The angle of the man's right leg and the tense way he holds his hand suggest a minor injury which momentarily is quite painful. The rather concerned way in which the girl looks at the man shows that although she has been forced to do this, she is rather contrite about her action.

The compositional structure is very simple. Since the man's injured hand is the center of interest, I made it the hub of a compositional wheel. Aside from this device, the picture is interesting chiefly because all the minor elements are very carefully related to each other. The diagrams above point out some of these relationships.

A picture is effectively composed only when *all* the elements it contains have been tied carefully into the organic structure. The hatpin in the girl's right hand is, physically speaking, a very small detail; but because it parallels one of the strongest action lines in the man's figure, the eye cannot ignore it. It has been silhouetted to make still more obvious the fact that this is the most important prop in the picture.

Illustrating reaction rather than action

The main illustration for the Fifth Installment of this serial

forms a striking contrast with the picture which appeared on the opening page of the story in the First Installment. Here I am illustrating not action — but *reaction*. Once again a murder has been committed. This time, however, I am emphasizing the psychological implications of the situation rather than the physical aspects.

This approach to illustration, this matter of choosing to depict the scene at the moment just before or just after the action occurs, seems to be characteristic of the best current work. In the present picture, there is absolutely no physical action at all. The tension is expressed entirely through compositional devices. There is some faint suggestion of arrested motion in the figure of the man standing above the dead girl, but it is quite clear that he is not striding but rather standing with his feet planted firmly on the floor.

Usually there is nothing so stilted or artificial in appearance as a scene of violent action. It makes a picture seem *more* static to show a figure running, because the only possible way to express this is through presentation of the action as seen during one part of a second. Paradoxically, it makes a picture seem *less* static if the movement depicted is obviously arrested. In that case the observer is not asked to believe in action which it is almost impossible to express convincingly.

The action in this picture is entirely psychological action and is expressed by purely pictorial means. The man has at last come literally face-to-face with himself. It is his moment of self-knowledge, when he is forced to look at his life and decide

whether he will admit to himself the evil within him. In one sense he is pleased that his plan for murder has worked. In another, perhaps, he recognizes the heinousness of his crimes.

The essential story is told directly by the pose of the two figures and the presence of the revolver. The man and his reflection in the mirror are so related that they create, with the figure of the girl, a square vertical plane around the perimeter of which the eye moves with jerky monotony. The half dozen vertical planes of the mirrors and the walls are quite similar in size and shape. They contribute a monotony of their own, acting like ponderous downward accents which beat out the heavy rhythm of the scene like blows on the bass drum.

The figure of the girl forms a soft, lyrical pattern within this brutal structure of verticals and horizontals. She is completely self-contained. Her shape is somewhat like an hourglass. Opposed to this hourglass shape is the apron drawn up at right angles to her waist. All these patterns are unending; when the eye becomes involved in following them it must keep on going around and around without stopping.

The monotonous squared rhythm is repeated in the design of the chest reflected in the mirror. The drawers are smaller horizontal accents which echo the larger vertical rhythms. The drawer handles, with their depressed, drooping shapes, form a

minor series of repetitions which carry the eye downward. The monotony is retained in the two simple shapes of the lamps set formally on either side of a perfectly circular mirror.

Several devices are used to make it apparent that the two sections at the right of the picture are mirrors. First, the arm of the man is cut off at the elbow in the reflected image. Second, the tie is given a definite striped pattern to help the observer see immediately that the full-face figure must be reflected. Third, a pull handle is drawn on the mirror, breaking the reflected image. Fourth, the mirror is separated into two sections, and the reflections of the molding and the chest of drawers are broken by the separation. Finally, an incomplete drapery cornice is introduced above the head of the reflected image. This could be explained only as a reflection.

The homely touch of the little whisk broom adds a certain mundane reality to the scene. It is a hanging form, which strengthens the downward rhythms. It is placed almost exactly midway between the murderer and his reflected image, to assist the sight line on its way.

The man is felt to be hemmed in. The upper border of the picture cuts close across the top of his head as he stands there, and the space between the top of the picture and his head is filled with repeated horizontal lines. The same thing is accomplished in the reflection by the drapery cornice, which practically pins this reflected image to the floor.

For a number of reasons the placement of the pistol is important. First, it is located near the girl's head so that if you look at her face you are bound to see the pistol. Second, it affords a path of entry into the picture. Third, it helps create the feeling that the white space within the lower picture area is actually a floor seen in perspective. It has been placed to echo the sight line between the standing figure and his reflection.

The soft forms of the window drapery at the left, the clothes in the closet, and the clothing on the chair at the right, are all executed to emphasize the hanging, drooping, downward feeling of the entire painting.

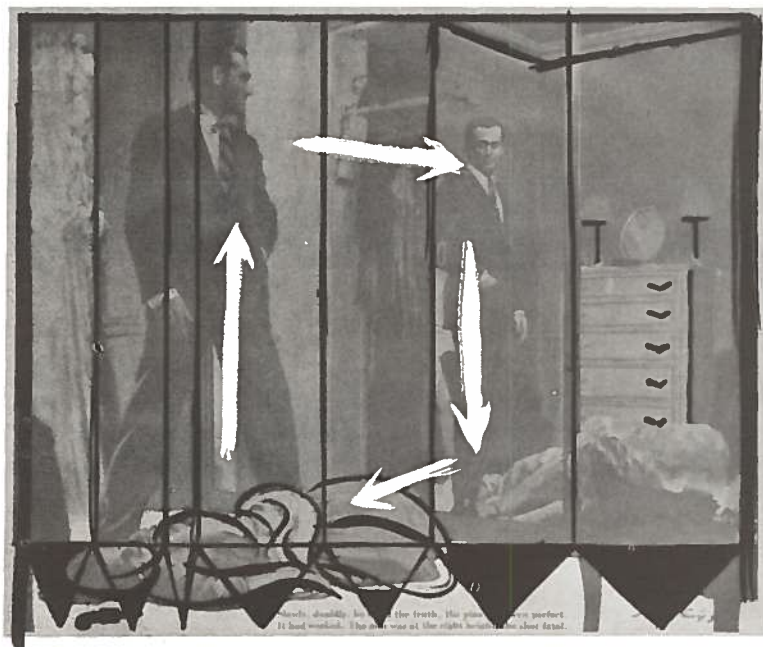
It may not be apparent that these various devices have been used so carefully for certain specific purposes. If it *were* apparent, the picture would not be successful — any more than a magician's trick is successful if the audience is able to follow his sleight of hand. But sleight of hand there must be, or there will be no magic.

Making an exciting scene dramatic

The last three installments of an eight-installment serial are usually restricted to one picture each. This picture may occupy no more than 55 per cent of one page, and this usually comes down to about 40 per cent. The editor feels that he has only a small chance of picking up readers at this point. The illustration is intended merely to identify the story and hold old readers.

These installments are placed well back in the magazine, where they must compete with the ads. Because of this fact the illustrations must have added impact to attract attention. Often this means less subtlety, and sometimes a use of silhouette or vignette. These pictures should nevertheless have the same general character as previous pictures in the series, however, so that

This was the illustration for the fifth installment. The rhythmic structure of the diagram is explained in the text.





This is the illustration for the sixth installment. The silhouetted figure of the detective serves to catch the eye. Every other storytelling element is imprisoned within the vignette.

the reader can identify the story easily and get back into the original mood.

When I first began to illustrate serials, I made the last paintings as elaborate as those I did for earlier installments. It soon became evident that this practice did not pay. The pictures were reduced so much that they lost force and character. Now I make them less complicated and as hard-hitting as possible.

The scene I chose to illustrate for the Sixth Installment of this serial was set in the library of the heroine's house. Both she and her husband are suspected of being guilty. The reader has been told long since that her husband is the murderer, but the police do not know that fact. The problem now is to make the reader wonder whether the villain will be found out. Perhaps he will escape — and the innocent heroine will have to suffer. To the very end, the serial illustrator must continue to work for suspense. No suspense, no readers — and no more illustrations!

There were four characters involved in this scene: the policeman assigned to guard the house; the police detective working on the case; the innocent heroine; and her husband, who is the murderer. I chose to illustrate several lines which were spoken by the detective. He has just come into the room. "Take her upstairs," he is saying. "Put her in her bedroom and don't let anyone talk to her." As the detective came into the room the husband had started to rise, thinking that he was discovered. But no — they're after the girl! The reader must hurry through this installment to find out just what is happening.

To present this scene as forcefully as possible, I massed the opposing characters on opposite sides of the composition. At the left I placed the hunted — the murderer and his wife, both of whom are suspected — and above them towers the symbol of the law. At the right is the detective, who calls them to justice.

The contrast of opposing forces is expressed even more clearly by the way the figures are handled in relation to the vignette. The two suspects are symbolically imprisoned within the shape

formed by the couch, the desk, the fireplace, and the door behind them. The obvious avenue of escape is barred by the policeman, who is an impersonal symbol framed against the door as if he were a figure embossed on a shield or a trademark. Unlike the imprisoned pair, the detective is left clear and free to move. Most of his body extends outside the vignettted shape. Additional attention is drawn to him by the pointed shapes of the table legs behind him. His gesturing hand, because of its silhouetted treatment and the fact that it is the only moving area along the vignette, is an obvious eye-catcher. *His gesture itself is not dramatic*, but the way it is handled makes it *seem* dramatic.

Although this careful compositional planning is not apparent to the casual observer — and should not be — it nevertheless plays an important part in his reaction to the picture. It is a way of controlling the observer's eye in order to get across the story. The left side of the picture is so "busy" that the eye finds it difficult to concentrate on any one particular gesture or object. It is, relatively speaking, an area of confusion. On the other hand, the right half of the picture, where the most important gesture is being acted out, is kept as simple as possible. The figure of the detective, for all practical purposes, is a black silhouette broken only by the head and gesturing hand. The observer *must* center his attention here.

The only other factor which lifts this illustration out of the ordinary is, oddly enough, the fact that the poses *are* so "ordinary." No attempt has been made to add drama to the scene through melodramatic action. On the contrary, I worked hard to make my characters seem as *natural* as possible. The situation is completely believable and convincing simply because I made no attempt to stretch or push my models into arbitrary positions.

It is certainly true that before I began photographing I worked out a rough in which I "composed" my models as impersonal shapes manipulated against other shapes. But when the actual posing began, within certain basic limitations of position and gesture I sought for the kind of *accidental, personal* movement which gives people (and even models are people) the kind of individuality which makes them seem living, breathing, feeling realities instead of mere painter's symbols.

In simplicity lies strength

The illustrations for the last two installments of this serial were done as simply as possible to command attention.

The illustration for Installment Seven again featured murder. This time the victim is a maid who accidentally came across some evidence implicating the guilty husband. When he realizes this he arranges to meet her. The result, of course, is that the girl is strangled and the man retrieves the incriminating evidence from her purse.

Composing two figures alone for maximum dramatic impact is not as easy as it looks. My approach to this problem is made clear by the analysis.

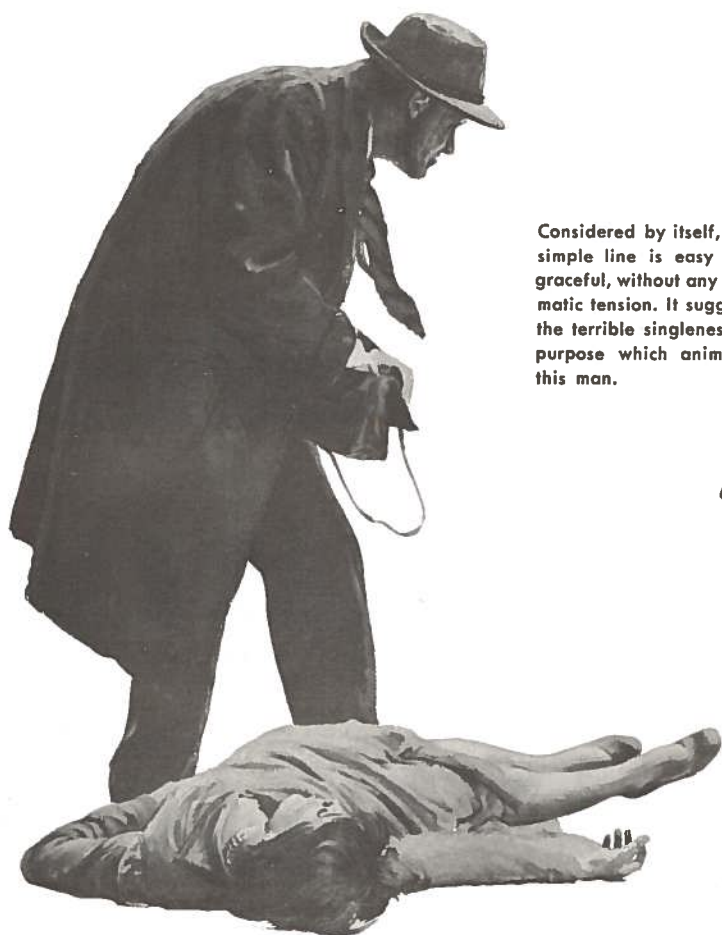
With Installment Eight we reach the end of the serial. At last the heroine discovers what the reader has known for some time — the fact that her husband is responsible for this unbelievable series of crimes. She accidentally came across evidence which

leaves no doubt of his guilt. This evidence involves the gloves which she holds in the illustration. She is now debating whether or not she should turn him over to the police.

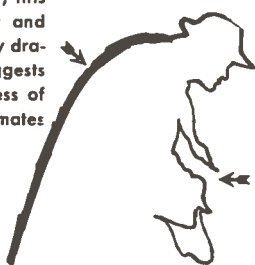
In this illustration I stressed once more simplicity and force of presentation. The only props used were those which were essential to tell the story. The bureau and lamp set the bedroom locale unmistakably; the door jam and suggestion of a chair establish the existence of the next room. This neighboring room was shown because the location of this room in relation to the bedroom was important in the story. Simple as this material is, the picture was nevertheless composed with as much care and thought as it would have been if I were doing a full-page job for the opening installment. The props were chosen because of their curves and elegance, and the pose was arranged to convince the reader of the femininity and desirability of the heroine.

For those who insist on knowing "what happened" let me hasten to enlighten them. The police already suspect the murderer and take him into custody before his wife is forced to betray him. Meanwhile, a highly eligible young man of sterling character who has hovered in the background throughout the story shows definite signs of appreciating the heroine's good points; she will have a future as well as a past. The villain, in spite of his crimes, will probably not face execution. The law has discovered that he can hardly be held accountable for his actions. At worst, he faces a long period of convalescence in the asylum — he is judged to be nuttier than a fruitcake.

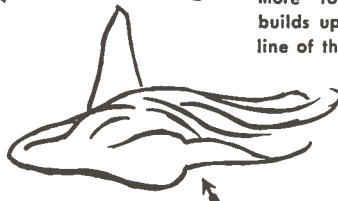
The organization of this picture for installment eight shows how similar shapes and curves are used to tie a composition together. Here the lampshade, for example, echoes the shape of the lower part of the girl's jacket. The line of her left thigh repeats the curve of the bureau leg, etc. In creating the vignette, as much care was expended in designing the *negative* shapes—the space pattern around the objects—as in relating the *positive* shapes—the objects themselves.



Considered by itself, this simple line is easy and graceful, without any dramatic tension. It suggests the terrible singleness of purpose which animates this man.



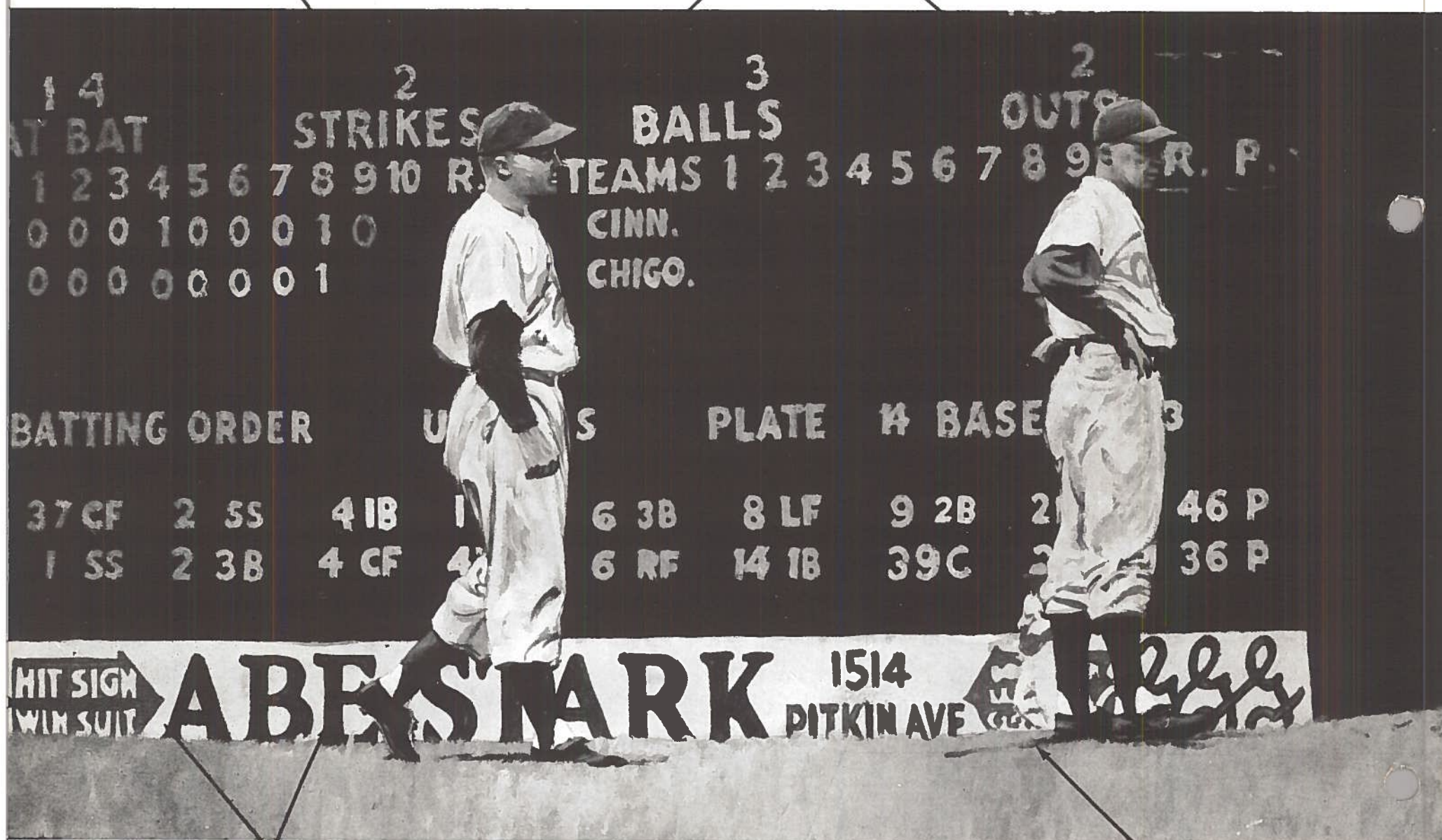
In strong contrast with the simple line opposite, this nervous silhouette suggests the jittery guilt of the murderer. It actually tells the story of the picture. Working against the completely plain line, it gains even more force by comparison and builds up a bow-like tension in the line of the man's back.



The passivity of the dead girl is expressed in calm, wavelike lines which are completely enclosed in a quiet pattern. The fact that she is dead, and not asleep, is suggested in the extreme position of her body — particularly of the head and neck. I have learned never to be afraid of attempting an unusual pose simply because it might be difficult to draw convincingly. An artist must always assume that he can draw *anything*. The girl's face is somewhat hidden in order to diminish her importance and let the observer look over her to the real center of interest.

Staccato quality of scoreboard adds visual — and therefore emotional — excitement.

Difference in poses demands comparison; comparison leads eye to conference: Back leg in left pose directs eye to arm position in right pose — and thence to conference.



Arrow starts eye moving from left to right; eye is carried on farther to right by sign. Regular lettering in sign suggests steps of players.

Arrow pointing to left, a necessary part of the story background, is broken up by ball player's legs so as not to discourage eye movement to right.

Case History No. 14 — Bonus Rookie

Physical action vs. psychological action

Almost every story can be illustrated in either of two ways: On the one hand, the artist can stress the *physical* action involved; or, on the other hand, he can stress the conflict of personalities — the *psychological* overtones of the situation.

This point is well illustrated by the two paintings shown here. They were both prepared for the same story, an opus called "Bonus Rookie" which appeared in the *Post*. Painting #1 was done first. My interest here was entirely in the psychological action. I wanted to get across the tension during a conference on the pitcher's mound at a tight spot in the game.

I went to a good deal of trouble to do this picture, and I liked it very much. The magazine was all set to run it, when suddenly we discovered that the author had made a horrendous mistake in his facts — he had set the picture in the wrong ball park — and at the last minute I had to make an entirely new illustration.

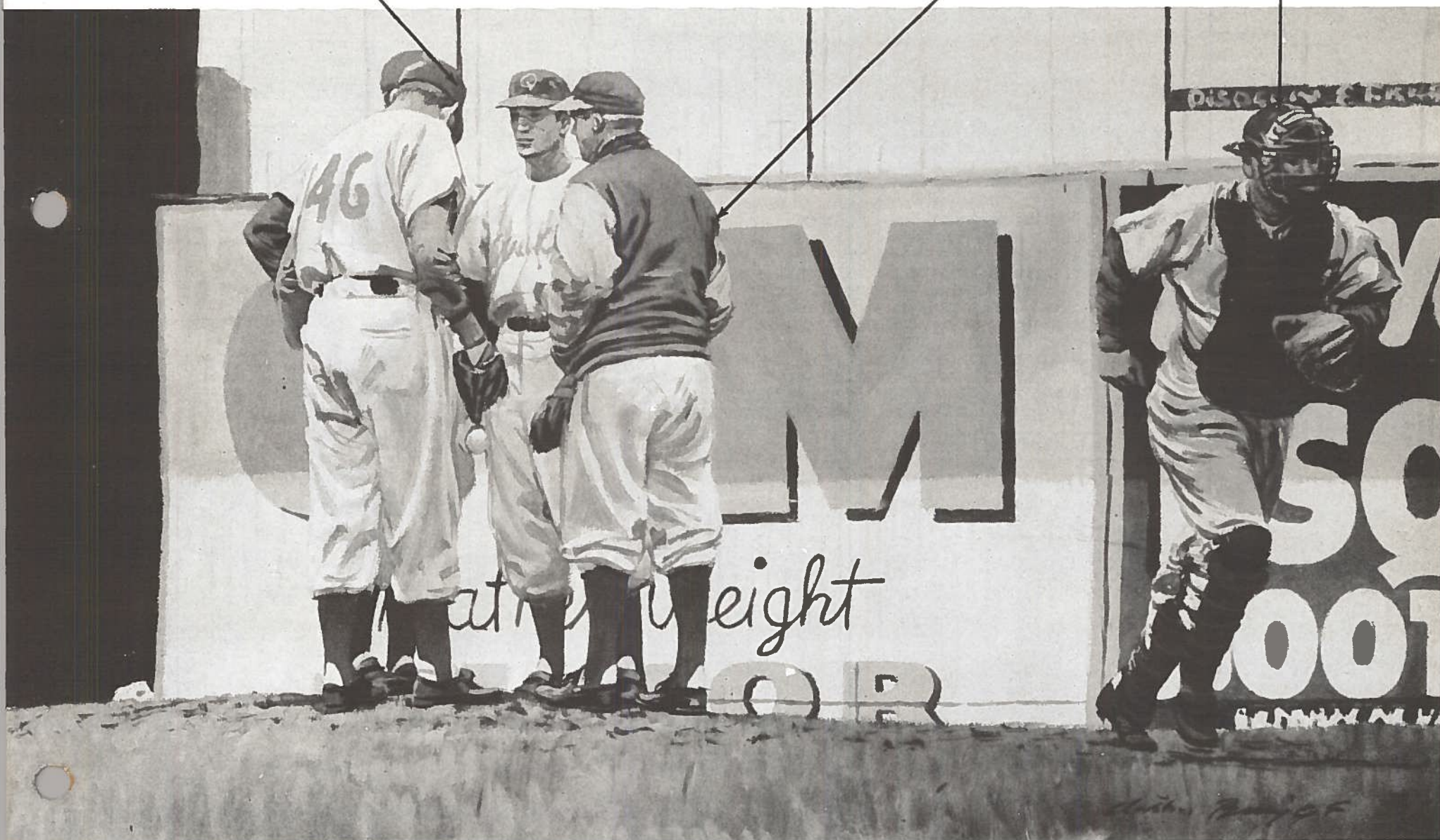
The story had already been scheduled for publication, and there was no time to collect new material for another picture like the first.

Therefore I chose a new situation involving the physical action which transpired at a crucial point in the game. It is a much more obvious and conventional approach, but it still contains a lot of excitement and tension. It is difficult to know whether this picture, Painting #2, was actually more successful as an illustration than the first illustration would have been if it had appeared. Personally I prefer to deal almost always with the psychological implications of a situation, rather than with obvious physical action, but either approach can be successful if the picture is well organized and given a new and slightly different slant.

Group is physically quiet; emphasis is on the psychological action.

Group is massed, but given movement by exciting shape variations of the leg pattern. Psychological tension is underscored by contrast between light and heavy lettering in background. Low eye level, combined with tableau treatment, adds monumentality and importance to scene, thus underscoring significance of conference.

Moving figure is enclosed within background signs to decrease eye-catching action.



1 This was my first choice as an illustration for the story. The author was a rabid baseball fan, and he originally set the scene in Ebbets Field, Brooklyn. Therefore I went to great lengths to make sure every detail would be completely authentic. I procured special photographs of this park, taken from exactly the angle I had chosen to use in the illustration. Here the setting and characters are viewed close up, as if seen by one of the players. All the physical action is stopped, as the psychological action mounts and the tension builds up. The only real physical motion is seen in the figure of the running player at the right. His motion suggests that the climax is at hand — the decision is about to be announced. The other figures have an almost classic restraint, like the figures in a Greek frieze. If presented against a

plain background, this scene would hold very little excitement for the average reader. When the figures themselves fail to project movement, then the background must provide reader interest. Here the interplay of shapes, values, and textures creates visual excitement which reflects the psychological excitement of the motionless figures. I worked out the details of the scoreboard at the left very carefully, so that a baseball fan could identify the precise moment in the story when the action took place. The scoreboard was included, however, not primarily to give information to the reader but for design purposes. The three signs in back of the figures serve as props which communicate the color and atmosphere of this particular setting, but they too have definite functions to perform as part of the design.



2 This second illustration is the one that finally appeared in the magazine. It is a semi-realistic job, with the emphasis on the physical action — a more or less conventional approach which could be counted on to appeal to baseball fans. This picture is very simple in its organization. The long horizontals help tie the picture together. These horizontals are crossed at right angles by the upright vertical group of the bat boy and the nearer kneeling figure; the strong opposition of lines says in effect, "Here is where the action is taking place." The waiting figure of the next batter on the right-hand side points in toward the center of interest, as does the leaning figure of the pitcher at the left. The sweep of the upper stands, with their diagonal lines, also helps carry the eye toward the batter's circle. In this painting the excitement is concentrated in the action portrayed by the main figures. Therefore the people in the stands were brushed in without any attempt at detail, because we know they are people anyway; their only value is to provide textural excitement without detracting from the main figures. The contrast between the handling of these two pictures suggests a manner of working which can be stated as follows: If the figures themselves lack physical action and excitement, as in Figure 1, that action and excitement must be introduced through the organization of the composition and the rendering of the background; but if the figures themselves are engaged in physical action, as in this picture, the background may be played down to avoid conflict and confusion.

Bond paper, twigs, and modeling clay, plus imagination, help bring the exotic windbreak to life and create a visual reality of the author's descriptions. The textures and patterns which appear in the finished painting were taken from sleeping mats used in this region of Australia, as authenticated by the author's photographic material.



Case History No. 15 — The Patrol From Oodnadata

Twigs, bond paper and imagination

Occasionally a story presenting an almost impossible research problem turns up. "Patrol from Oodnadata" was a good example of this particular kind of headache. The *Saturday Evening Post* sent it on to me with the warning that the author of the story had taken a good deal of kidding about the authenticity of illustrations for previous stories he had set in this same locale, and the editor was sure I would take the necessary trouble to see that every detail was right, etc., etc.

Naturally a challenge of this kind sounded interesting to me. I read the manuscript enthusiastically. It turned out to be a story of the Australian Bush Police, and described a manhunt on the remote plains of Australia. The Bush Police are assisted in locating their quarry by loyal native trackers, who are as full of extrasensory cunning and resourcefulness as any of James Fenimore Cooper's noble Indians.

The scene which most impressed me described an incident that took place at night. While the Bush Police stand by, two native trackers are reading volumes of information from a few scuffed footmarks in the dusty earth. Only the light of a single torch illumines the scene. The day has been unbearably hot; but the night is cold and a rough windbreak made of sleeping mats has been erected on sticks at this site.

I had never done any illustrations dealing with the Australian plains, had never seen an Australian Bush Policeman, and had no idea what the native trackers would look like or what they might be wearing. Details of this kind can, of course, be faked. Almost inevitably, however, the illustrator is caught doing it, and such experiences can be very embarrassing — especially if

the matter comes to the attention of the magazine or client. The only substitute for faking is research, and I immediately began trying to locate the necessary information.

My first step was to contact an old friend of mine at the Museum of Natural History in New York City. To my disappointment I learned that the particular section of Australia where this story had supposedly taken place was extremely remote. The Museum had very little pertinent information on the subject. No one seemed to know very much about these Plains, and apparently no one within reach had ever been there.

It was clear that my usual sources of information would probably turn up nothing of value. I therefore got in touch with the author of the story and told him my problem. Fortunately he was able to supply me with photographs and other reference material showing the authentic manner of dress and equipment of the story characters. He also sent me photos of sleeping mats similar to those described in the story.

Although I could now proceed to work out the picture with some confidence, I still had nothing really concrete to begin with. Usually I have to have an object, a character, or a setting which will spark my imagination and get the composition rolling. Almost any object will do, provided it is an integral part of the scene.

I decided to try and see what this windbreak looked like. With a few twigs, some modeling clay, and some strips of bond paper, I fashioned a replica of the windbreak, following the author's description. By manipulating the paper, and shining a light on the set-up from various angles, I made the Australian windbreak

come to life before my eyes. With my camera I recorded the experiments. Now I possessed a graphic, exciting background against which to place the action, and I had found the springboard for the picture.

The next question was how to pose the figures. The differences in station, race, and occupation provided the answer, just as the description of the setting had provided the background. The policemen represent law and order, plus the dominance of the white man. I would make them strong upright shapes, which in a sense intrude upon the composition but are yet part of it. Because they are considered higher, more individual types than the natives, their forms, while carefully related, would not be as tightly composed as the forms of the trackers. Contrasting with the towering white symbols of law and order, the natives would be earth forms, conveying in their movement something of primitive cunning.

Once I had established the general placement of the figures and the organization of the picture, I began casting around for proper models. A surveyor friend of mine agreed to pose for the figures of the policemen. I was particularly happy to get him for the job. His daily activity had hardened him into the rugged, outdoor type I needed. Best of all, he had suitable "lived-in" clothes available. Many illustrations are ruined because the characters appear to be wearing "new" clothes completely inappropriate for the situation; or they look uncomfortable, as though they were wearing these clothes for the first time. My model's clothes were well-worn, as they certainly should have been for the purposes of this illustration, and he felt as natural in them as he did in his own skin.

Finding suitable models for the native trappers was a more difficult problem. I consulted anthropologists, who informed me that the native bushmen are very simple and undeveloped people standing near the threshold of the human race. Furthermore, they have certain anatomical differences which would make it impossible to paint them convincingly from models of European origin. For instance, they squat in a unique manner which reflects their physical differences.

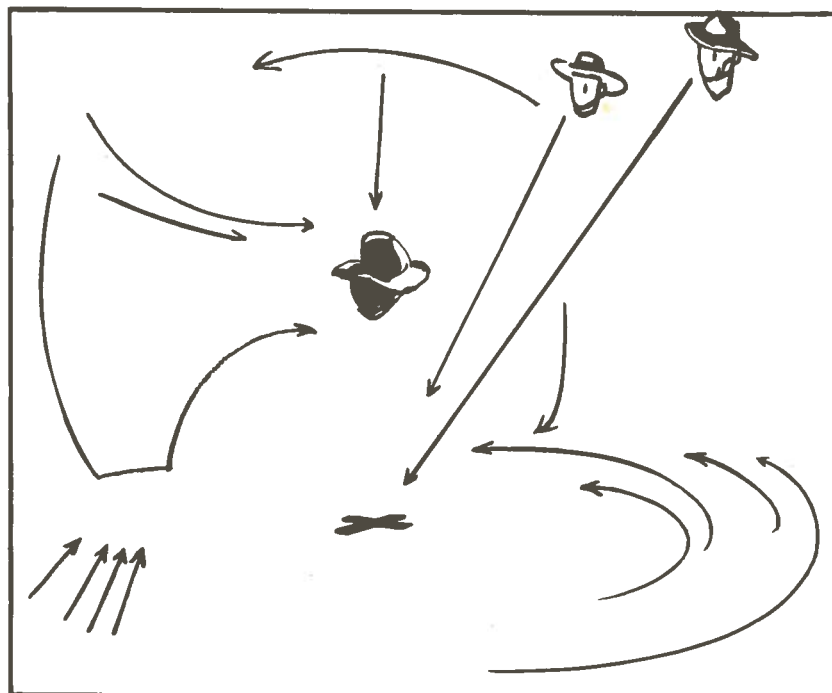
These facts were also apparent from photographs which the author had sent me. It appeared, however, that certain other races have somewhat similar anatomical characteristics. I located a man I knew slightly who had been born in the Virgin Islands. He posed for me in the studio. As I sketched him I made a few necessary changes to approximate the appearance of the natives I had seen in the photographs. The resulting poses were thus as authentic as I could make them.

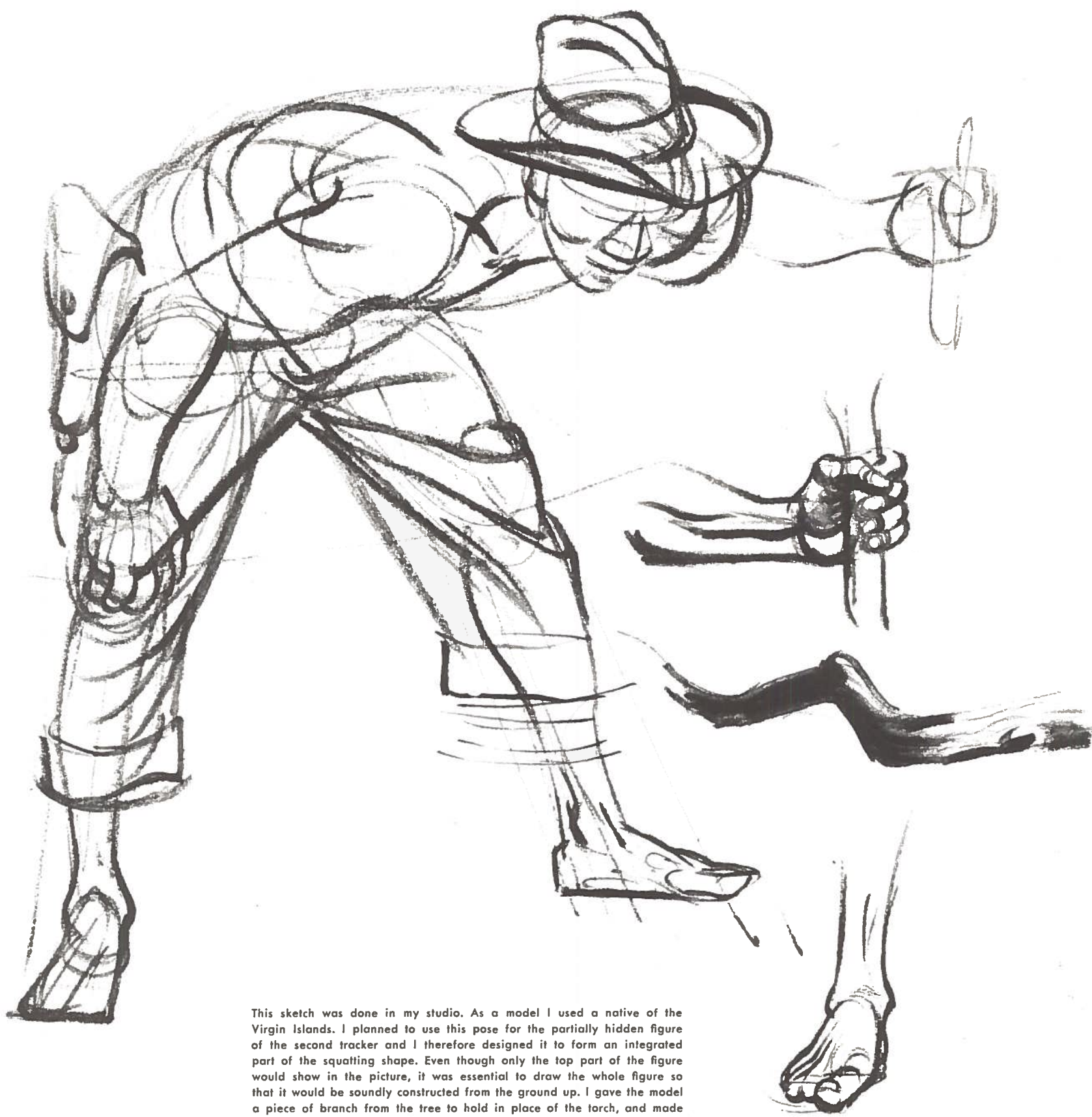
The torch had been carefully described in the story. Apparently the natives took a branch of a tree, wrapped grass around it tightly, and soaked the grass in pitch. To see what effect this might give, I took a branch, wrapped rags around it, and soaked the rags in kerosene. When this was lighted in the backyard at night, it gave me a very good idea of the light the story torch must have provided.

I now had all the essential information for the development of the illustration. In organizing these various elements, I decided to emphasize the drama and mystery which the scene naturally suggests. I first established the windbreak background. It encloses the area of action almost like a frame within the



The diagram above shows how the playing area is delimited by the oval planes of light generated by the torch. All the action takes place within this area. The two forms of the natives at the left have the quality of spheres; opposed to them are the columnar figures of the Policemen at the right. The diagram below analyzes the various sight lines leading the observer's eye toward the center of interest — which is hidden behind the foreground figure.





This sketch was done in my studio. As a model I used a native of the Virgin Islands. I planned to use this pose for the partially hidden figure of the second tracker and I therefore designed it to form an integrated part of the squatting shape. Even though only the top part of the figure would show in the picture, it was essential to draw the whole figure so that it would be soundly constructed from the ground up. I gave the model a piece of branch from the tree to hold in place of the torch, and made separate studies of the hand holding the branch, and of the branch itself.



These were the two photographs I used for the figures of the policemen. The model was a surveyor friend of mine, and wore his "working" clothes. I assembled authentic props of the type described in the story. The photos were taken with a Rolleiflex, using a single photoflood light. They were posed outdoors, at night. As a substitute for the pole of the windbreak, I suspended a garden rake from a clothesline post. Since I wanted the two policemen to have more the character of symbols than individuals, I used the same model for both figures.



Here is a second study from the same model used for the sketch on the opposite page. I had tried to duplicate this pose myself, but I found it impossible. A few changes from the model were necessary in order to make the sketched figure reflect the characteristics of natives shown in photos sent to me by the author. The sketch was done with a brush-pen on water color paper.



Since the sketches of the two natives had been made in the studio under normal lighting conditions, it was necessary to find out how these figures would appear if lighted as they were in the picture. I therefore made these two value studies, basing them on the sketches and on the lighting effects seen in the photographs of the two policemen. It would have been much easier if I had been able to make photographs of my model for the bushmen under the actual lighting conditions the picture required. However, this was not practical for a number of reasons, and studies of this type were the next best thing.



The finished painting occupied the upper part of a right-hand page in the *Post*. The original measured approximately 13 x 20 inches and was done in oil on a gesso panel. By permission Saturday Evening Post © 1947 Curtis Pub. Co.

picture border, and suggests that this enclosed space is of special significance. The eye is prevented from wandering off into distracting areas.

Opposite the two policemen at the right I placed the chief center of interest — the area of earth bearing the footprints — hiding it behind the rounded, basic figures of the natives. This is a simple procedure designed to pique the reader's curiosity, but it is very effective. Although the observer who looks at the painting cannot see what is going on himself, it is clear that the policemen at the right know exactly what is happening. The reader undoubtedly identifies himself with these two white figures. They are, so to speak, *the eyes of the reader*; and since they are in a good position to know what is going on, it is implied that the reader will also know — if he reads the story.

The extreme contrast created by the unusual light source says "mystery." Accustomed as we are to seeing everyday objects lighted from above (outdoors by the sun or indoors by ceiling lights), any unusual light source immediately suggests that the scene is different. The nature of the light source makes a specific comment on this difference. Here the light source, with its strong contrast of light and dark, is intended to startle and create an atmosphere of violence. Compositionally speaking, the torch was placed almost directly above the center of interest to concentrate the observer's attention on this area.

This single light source not only emphasizes the dramatic tension of the scene — it also expresses the forms clearly. The dark sides of the forms are carefully silhouetted against light areas, and the light sides against dark areas. Only those edges are allowed to blend with their surrounding values where it is felt that the form has already been sufficiently established.

The dark gap between the upper and lower mats which form the windbreak is vital to the painting. It serves to silhouette the top of the stooping figure, and at the same time it is an arrow which points to the light. It also provides a sight line leading to the policemen. This, of course, is only one obvious example from among the many sight lines and compositional lines used to control the attention of the observer and make him look where he should look. A study of the analyses will reveal the carefully integrated designs which weave the picture together into an organic, three-dimensional structure.

The strong orange-yellow light from the torch washes out most of the local color in the painting, creating an all-pervasive monotone effect. Only minor color harmonies are allowed to interfere with the dominant orange-yellow tone, and then only in areas which can be held under control so well that they cannot distract the attention of the observer.





Above is the finished ad for American Airlines as it appeared in leading national magazines. Beside it is a diagram indicating the path the eye is expected to follow as it moves across the picture plane to the airplane. The numbered objects perform their story-telling actions which illustrate the caption for the ad. 1. Man working hard to remove snow from his car's path so he can get moving; 2. man standing with hand on snow-covered car indicating that the car is not moving; 3. another man with shovel, proving that this car is also stuck; 4. approaching snow plow and 5. men on telephone pole, both stressing the severity of the weather; and 6. the plane flying serenely above.

Case History No. 16 — Snowtime's No Time To Give Up Flying

Tying a split composition together

An experienced artist normally plans his composition from the beginning so that it will hold together as firmly as a jigsaw puzzle. Each element is designed to take its proper place in an organization of thrusts and balances. It should be impossible to change the shape, color, or position of one element without making other important adjustments throughout the picture to bring it back into balance. A well-designed picture never runs the risk of "falling apart" in the middle.

Occasionally, however, for one reason or another, it is necessary to work with a compositional idea which runs the serious danger of becoming two pictures instead of one. It could easily split into separate halves tied together only by subject matter and the fact that the two compositions are placed together in the same frame. Then the artist must use all his technical ingenuity to unite the two ideas into one organic pattern.

This was the problem I faced when the rough for this picture reached me from the account executive of American Airlines. Fortunately, years of experience in working with him has led to an understanding between us which permits me to accept his idea as it stands or vary it as I see best.

In this case the agency rough seemed to me to have serious weaknesses. The eye enters the picture in the center and travels

right through to the far distance without pausing long enough to see the situation or the action that is going on at either side. If the comp were folded in half, each side of the picture would be complete in itself. At the same time, presenting the foreground figures in back view throws away the opportunity for more expressive action. The other elements of the picture appear isolated and independent. The whole conception, from an artistic viewpoint, is rather stiff and uninteresting.

In making these comments I am not criticizing the way the art director did his job — because his job was *not* to develop a finished composition, but rather to show me what basic *selling* ideas should be included and what the setting and action should be like. It was *my* job to take these various ideas and put them together in an organized, unified picture. It would have been a fairly simple matter to redistribute this material so that the possibility of a divided composition would have been avoided entirely. However, it was challenging to work with the art director's original compositional plan and see what could be done to hold it together and make it more expressive.

I was working on this snow scene in the middle of summer. Therefore my first step was to dig through my scrap file to see what photographs and sketches were available. I found plenty

of material, since I had taken a great many photographs during previous winters. My files also contained a number of sketches made during a heavy snowfall.

I decided to base the composition on an eyepath running diagonally across the painting from right to left, leading the eye quite directly up to a telephone pole and the plane above it. This left a substantial foreground area at the lower left where I could place a close-up group of stalled car and driver. To make sure this group would attract attention, I developed two "bull's-eyes" formed by the head of the shovelling figure and the headlight on the car. The close repetition of these similar geometric shapes creates a strong center of interest which draws the eye to this area first of all. Thus the observer gets the "theme" of the painting immediately . . . stalled car . . . deep snow . . . inconvenience . . . discomfort . . . missed appointments. The theme is stated again in the middle-distance car and figure group.

Once this part of the story has been presented clearly, it is important to lead the eye rapidly to the plane, so that the observer will get the selling message of the picture. The sky, of course, must be sunny; and the plane must be moving along so easily

that the observer will ask himself, "Why shouldn't I take advantage of air travel instead of trying to go places by car?"

The composition as I finally worked it out is actually very similar to the art director's rough. I have retained all the selling points, and kept them in the same general areas of the composition. However, the scene has now been "brought to life." Each individual has become a person; each prop has materialized as a particular object. Characters and objects have been given new scale in a real landscape, so that anyone looking at the scene will feel, "This isn't merely a synthetic portrayal of an idea — something that *might* have happened. It's a true-to-life picture of something that *did* happen. It happened to these people, and it could very easily happen to me."

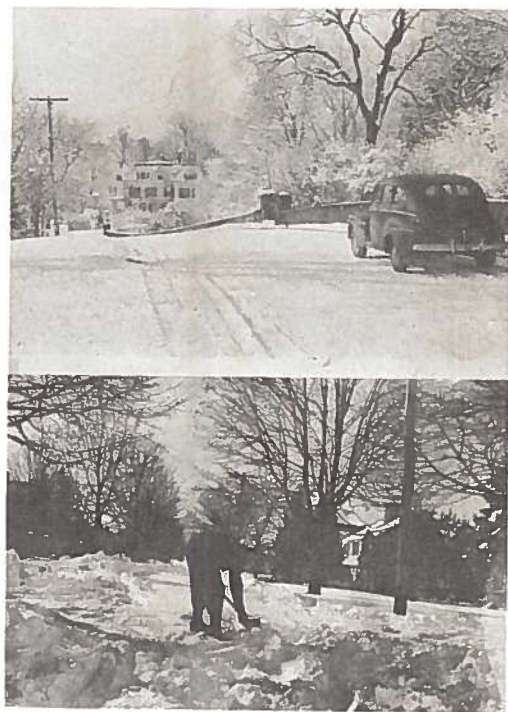
In addition to making the scene appear real and convincing, however, I have also organized it carefully so that the eye is made to look at one thing first, and then another, until the whole story is told. The observer is *forced* to look at the snow-bound cars, and then at the plane. If he looks at the picture at all, he is bound to get the story the headline is selling — "Snow time's no time to give up flying!"



The agency rough was weak in that each side of the picture was complete in itself and the back view of the foreground figures threw away the opportunity for more expressive action. The eye entered the picture at its center and traveled through to the far distance undeterred by any interest arresting enough to tell the story.



For a time I toyed with this arrangement. Though its simplicity would have been effective viewed merely as a drawing, I abandoned it because it told too little of the necessary story. I felt that two or three comments on the difficulty of driving in winter weather would be more convincing.



These are photos from my personal file. The top one, which supplied my background, was taken and saved in the hope that it would one day serve as it did. Since I was working on the painting during the summer, the bottom photograph refreshed my memory of snow texture.



This is one of fifteen or twenty photos of a model posing for the large figure in the foreground of my picture. The painting is a synthesis of several such poses. I got a charge out of the double bull's-eye formed by the car's headlight and the man's head.

A fundamental of my approach is to bring as much of my own experience as possible to every job that I do. Here is a page of sketches made a year or two before I received the assignment. Notice how many of them turned up in the finished picture.

Case History No. **17** — The Russian Who Wanted To Be Friends**Painting the head in color**

My color palette is very simple when I begin painting. It includes raw and burnt umber, cadmium red, Venetian red, Naples yellow, cadmium lemon, ultramarine blue, and, of course, white. (Where "white" is mentioned in this discussion, "Permalba" white is intended.) These colors are basic and find their place on the palette for every painting.

As the requirements of mood or local color vary, the palette's resources are increased until I may be using almost every variation of the primaries available. Naturally I warn against indiscriminate addition of color after color. Here, as in all other phases of illustration, the simplest statement seems the most successful. Remember that the four-color process of reproduction will use only one blue, one yellow, and one red. The closer you can stay to the printer's ink primaries, the purer your colors will appear in reproduction.

Blues seem particularly difficult to reproduce and I strongly advise against the use of two different blues in the same painting; such as, for example, ultramarine and Prussian blue. Violets and purples also reproduce poorly and should be avoided if possible.

Many inexperienced artists seem to have difficulty mixing an acceptable flesh color. A very useful flesh color can be prepared quite simply with Venetian red, Naples yellow, and white. The mixture should be cooled and grayed with a small amount of

ultramarine blue. Other colors may be added to indicate reflected light, local color, etc., but this basic formula works extremely well for a standard flesh color.

I try to vary the mixture of flesh colors from picture to picture in order to avoid monotony. Another good flesh formula is Italian earth and purple madder and white. This makes a very cool flesh color, the blue in the purple madder taking the place of the ultramarine in the first formula.

Still another good flesh mixture is yellow ochre, cadmium red, white, and ultramarine blue. With a little experimentation you will find many successful combinations of colors with which to vary the flesh tones and keep your approach to this problem fresh, new, and varied. All flesh colors are essentially a combination of red, yellow, and white, cooled somewhat by the admixture of blue. Ultramarine blue is particularly good for this purpose, since it is an extremely true blue and therefore does not add spurious colors in addition to blue. When mixed with red, yellow, and white, it merely tends to gray them.

To show you in detail how I handle a typical color problem, I will present my rendering of this illustration in a step-by-step color analysis. Unfortunately it was impossible to reproduce this discussion in color, but if you work out a similar problem with the specific colors named, a satisfactory development of color relationships in a head will be obtained.

1 My first step was to make careful pencil studies of the figures on tracing paper. Then, working in oil paint, I laid in the drawing directly on a piece of canvas mounted over Masonite. The drawing was done with a brush, using a mixture of turpentine and Japan drier as medium. The drier served to set the line so that it could be painted over immediately without smudging. Oil paint dries very slowly on canvas, and the use of a drier in the medium is essential if one is to meet deadlines. Boneboard or gesso, the surface I use for most of my work, is so absorbent that drier is unnecessary. As you can see, I have worked out the drawing very carefully — even to the point of suggesting detailed modeling and values. This basic drawing will show through during the next painting steps and serve as a guide. To make sure of this, I will work in a semi-transparent manner, using a great deal of medium.



2 In order to key the values of the head properly, I first laid in the background tones roughly. At this point the base color of the flesh has also been painted in. This basic flesh color was mixed with Mars yellow, white, and ultramarine blue in a porcelain dish. I prepared a sufficient amount of this mixture at the beginning so that I could always go back and regain the basic flesh tone whenever I felt it was needed.





3 This reproduction shows the actual size at which I was painting. Now more of the surrounding values have been laid in. The whites of the eyes have been done in a pale tint of raw umber mixed with white. The pupils have been colored with a pale tint of ultramarine blue and raw umber mixed together. Burnt Sienna accents have been added beneath the hat brim.



4 Here the nostrils, mouth, and the accent beneath the right ear have been placed with burnt Sienna, even though the basic flesh color is not thoroughly dry and picks up a bit when painted over. Washes of rose madder have been applied to the nose, cheeks, and ears. To indicate the beard on the man's cheeks and chin, and the shadow under the hat brim, I touched up the basic flesh tone with ultramarine blue and transparent brown.



5 A small amount of ultramarine blue has been mixed with the basic flesh color and applied to the eyelids. Ultramarine blue and accents of white have been added to the eyes. The heavy eyebrows, and the deep accent beneath the nose, were laid in with pure raw umber. Touches of cadmium red were added in the dark areas of the ears, and a wash of Prussian blue was placed under the hat brim. The top of the hat was accented with Prussian blue and white plus Mars yellow.



6 Only a few details still require attention. The higher form was brought out with a light mixture of the basic flesh color. The darker accents in the eyes and face were placed with a mixture of the basic flesh color and ultramarine blue. Now the head is completed.

7 Here is the illustration as it appeared in the *Post*. My aim throughout the painting was to make the figure we have discussed look as lost, as lonely, and as friendless as possible. The background was designed to further this idea. The stairway is unpeopled and unused, and the trees at the right of the figure droop down in a hopeless and forlorn way. These trees are placed far behind the lonely figure to emphasize the emptiness of the space which surrounds him. The man on the left, a completely different type with entirely different feelings and associations, is backed up more closely by sharply defined material. There is less space around him; he seems more secure and self-confident because he dominates what space there is.



The distinguished famous artist, Austin Briggs, who earns two million dollars a year, (Oh Hell, this is for publication, eight million dollars a year) dashing off masterful illustrations and advertisements with his deft, sure strokes and incredible knowledge of technique, is again just a guy who makes his living sweating it out, muddling through one of the toughest professions in the world. The same Austin Briggs, who has presumably been coolly dictating his lessons in a tastefully appointed book-lined study, revealing, through a faultless command of language, all the secrets of the studio, this same Austin Briggs, is, in reality, at the time of this writing sitting in his living room (rather messy at present) eating popcorn and watching the Giants get trounced on T.V., while he incidentally muddles through one last page.

Yes, this is that mysterious little page which is always tacked onto the end of particularly dull texts. For some unaccountable reason, the writer who has been leading his defenseless students through page after page of dull pedantic prose must now suddenly blossom forth into a folksy type guy — a regular fellow.

If this course has made all the problems of the illustrating profession ridiculously easy, please wire me immediately; I find it a lot of work with new problems on every job. Though I have written this course to the best of my ability, I realize that it is not in any sense the last word. Don't "fight" the course, it is backed up by considerable experience. But, on the other hand, if I have made points which you have tried to sympathize with and still find unsatisfactory, question them, find out why you cannot accept them, and then work out your own answers. This is what I will probably do in the years to come, and it should be your procedure. I sincerely believe that my lesson, if understood, will solve many of your problems and help you in the solution of many others, but you must continue to "grow"; you must continue the work I have started for you and write your own lessons as it were. I have told you most of what I know about this complex and difficult profession, but the rest is up to you. Don't let me frighten you with these warnings. It's the difficulties which make my profession, I hope *our* profession, so rewarding.

I cannot close without a word of thanks to those art directors, who commissioned the work reprinted here, for their encouragement and assistance. Many thanks also to my colleagues whose help and criticism was so invaluable. And a special bow to Floris Ferwerda, without whose help this whole project would have died stillborn.

Best of luck,

Austin Briggs



HOW I MAKE A PICTURE

by AUSTIN BRIGGS

ASSIGNMENT:

Your assignment is an illustration for a mystery story in the Saturday Evening Post.

The title of the story is "Trapped" and the blurb beneath the title reads "There are five people in the old house and one is dead. The long night has just begun, but murder has moved in and before dawn the trap will be sprung."

Here are the lines you are to illustrate.

"He sat quite still as the other guests filed slowly into the room. They were voiceless, faceless people. Above everything he desired they remain so; for he knew as soon as they began to speak the truth would be out." (The man described in the lines above is guilty of the crime.)

In planning your picture, remember that it must not only be an effective illustration of the literal picture suggested by the lines, but also one that takes full advantage of the picture structure to strengthen and support the literal idea. Try to make the shapes fit the mood. I have showed you how this can be done in my case histories.

Also keep in mind that the illustration must not conflict with the blurb below the title. In fact, it should tie up with this blurb as well as the lines it illustrates.

The Saturday Evening Post allows you any arrangement on a spread. (two facing pages). However, your illustration must not take up more than 55% of the total space. The rest is allotted for text, title, blurb and caption. Enclose a tissue paper rough the same size as the printed page showing the complete layout of the spread. The Post page measures 13 5/8" x 10 5/8". You can see several examples of my own roughs on Pages 44-46.

Your illustration should be in full color. Use any medium you wish. Be sure to follow the instructions given on the yellow "Introduction" and "Mailing" sheet. Remember that the over-all mailing size of your assignment should not exceed 15 x 22 inches.